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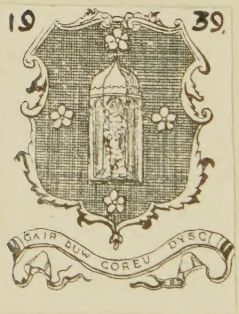

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THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE
FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

GENERAL EDITOR FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT:—
A. F. KIRKPATRICK, D.D.
DEAN OF ELY

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET
ISAIAH
CHAPTERS I—XXXIX

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THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH

CHAPTERS I—XXXIX

In the Revised Version

With Introduction and Notes

by

THE REV. J. SKINNER, D.D.

PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

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PREFACE

BY THE

GENERAL EDITOR FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE present General Editor for the Old Testament in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges desires to say that, in accordance with the policy of his predecessor the Bishop of Worcester, he does not hold himself responsible for the particular interpretations adopted or for the opinions expressed by the editors of the several Books, nor has he endeavoured to bring them into agreement with one another. It is inevitable that there should be differences of opinion in regard to many questions of criticism and interpretation, and it seems best that these differences should find free expression in different volumes. He has endeavoured to secure, as far as possible, that the general scope and character of the series should be observed, and that views which have a reasonable claim to consideration should not be ignored, but he has felt it best that the final responsibility should, in general, rest with the individual contributors.

A. F. KIRKPATRICK.

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INTRODUCTION

I.

The History of Isaiah's Time.

The Book of Isaiah derives its name from the great prophet of the eighth century whose writings are contained in the first thirty-nine chapters. Although the authentic remains of Isaiah's work do not occupy quite two-thirds of these chapters, his individual genius dominates the collection; and the critical task of distinguishing his original prophecies from later additions must start from a right appreciation of the character and personality of this greatest of the prophets of Israel. No further justification is needed for making the biography of Isaiah the first and longest chapter in an introduction to the book which bears his name.

Isaiah is the most distinguished of the group of writing prophets who heralded the Assyrian crisis of the eighth century B.C. The spiritual movement inaugurated by these inspired men was, from the political point of view, an episode in the expansion of the Assyrian empire, and the breaking up of small nationalities in Western Asia. Of them all Isaiah had the longest and most varied activity. His public career covered the last forty years of the century, being nearly co-extensive with the successive reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah. During all that time he watched the course of events with the keen eye of a statesman and the profound insight of a prophet, and adapted his message to the exigencies of a rapidly evolving situation. Hence it happens that while in the case of

his precursors Amos and Hosea, and of his younger contemporary Micah, a general acquaintance with the historical circumstances may suffice for the understanding of their writings, for any real comprehension of the work of Isaiah a close study of political developments is an indispensable preliminary.

The Age of Uzziah (*c.* 790–740). The youth of Isaiah fell in a period of great outward prosperity, both in his native country of Judah and in Northern Israel. The political independence and territorial extent of both kingdoms were still intact, although as far back as 854 Ahab of Israel had fought against Shalmaneser III[1] of Assyria at Ḳarḳar, and in 842 Jehu had paid tribute to that monarch. The destructive wars with the Aramean state of Damascus, which had brought the northern kingdom to the verge of ruin (2 Kings xiii. 3 ff.), and from which Judah also had suffered severely (xii. 17 ff.), had ceased for a generation. With the astonishing recuperative vitality of half-civilised communities, Israel and Judah quickly rose to a height of power and splendour which neither had enjoyed since the days of Solomon. Under Jeroboam II, Israel recovered dominion over most of the countries formerly subject to Solomon (2 Kings xiv. 25, 28), and wealth no doubt began to accrue from the plunder and tribute of subject states. Judah was equally fortunate in its sovereign Uzziah. The conquest of Edom (xiv. 7) and the possession of the Red Sea port of Elath (xiv. 22) gave him control of the caravan trade between the Mediterranean seaboard and the East; and the revenue thus obtained was wisely spent in developing the resources of the country and perfecting its military efficiency (2 Chr. xxvi. 1—15). The result was that when Isaiah began his public ministry Judah had attained a degree of wealth, power, and civilisation which must have placed it, along with Israel, in the front rank of the petty states lying between the empires of the Euphrates and the Nile. "The land was full of silver and gold, and there was no end of its treasures; the land was full of horses, and there was no end of its chariots" (Isa. ii. 7).

[1] See Johns, *Ancient Assyria*, p. 95.

That this outburst of material prosperity was attended by an aggravation of the social evils that seem inseparable from oriental government every page of the prophets bears witness. It is not necessary to trace in detail the economic changes, caused partly by an influx of wealth, which resulted in the spread of luxury and debauchery among the upper classes (Isa. iii. 16–23, v. 11 f., 22, xxviii. 1 ff., 6 ff., xxxii. 9 ff.), the rise of large landed estates and the expropriation of the race of peasant proprietors who had been the strength of the old Hebrew commonwealth (Isa. v. 8; Mic. ii. 2, 9.); or the systematic abuse of the forms of justice which turned law into an engine of robbery and oppression (Isa. i. 23, iii. 14 f., v. 23, x. 1, 2, xxix. 21). It is enough to say that in the abounding social disorder and corruption of the time the prophets read the sure presage of a terrible day of reckoning and judgement close at hand. The marvel is that their forebodings were not shared by the ruling classes either in Samaria or Jerusalem. In both capitals the prevailing spirit was one of optimism and careless security (Am. vi. 1, 13; Isa. v. 13 f., ix. 11). It looks as if the politicians did not realise that their sudden access of good fortune was mainly due to the repeated Assyrian attacks on Damascus early in the century, and that the power which had crippled Damascus threatened the independent existence of all the smaller nations of Western Asia. The collapse of Assyrian enterprise in the first half of the century seems to have fostered the delusion that no danger was to be apprehended from that quarter. Before the death of Uzziah, however, events had taken place which ought to have dispelled that notion. A new era of Assyrian conquest set in with the accession (in 745) of a usurper known to history as Tiglath-pileser IV, whose reign of 18 years was an almost uninterrupted campaign against the peoples bordering on the Assyrian empire. Towards the west his first great achievement was the siege and capture of Arpad (742–740), an important city some 50 miles inland from Antioch, and therefore right in the line of access to the Phœnician coast. The effect of this success on the politics of Syria was immediate:

among the names of those who now acknowledged the suzerainty of Assyria we find Raẓon (Rezin) of Damascus and Hiram king of Tyre. Two years later Tiglath-pileser defeated a strong coalition of northern states under Azariah (*Azriyau*) of Ya'udi[1] (in the Amanus region), and extended his conquests southward to Hamath on the Orontes, bringing the frontier of his empire down to the Lebanon mountains. It was in this year (738) that Menahem king of Israel purchased a precarious independence by the payment of an enormous tribute (2 Kings xv. 19 f.). Thus the danger had come close to the doors of North Israel, and the lesson can hardly have been lost on Judah. Yet the early writings of Isaiah give no indication that there was any uneasiness in the mind of the ruling classes with regard to the immediate future of the country.

The Syro-Ephraimite Confederacy (*c.* 735). Perhaps the first event that shook the statesmen of Jerusalem out of their false security was an indirect consequence of the forward movement of Assyria. In 735 4, just before the accession of Ahaz (cf. 2 Kings xv. 37 with xvi. 5 and Isa. vii. 1 ff.), a joint attack on Judah was planned by Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Samaria. There can be no doubt that the object of the expedition was to force Judah into a league of Syrian and Philistine states to resist the further aggression of Assyria, similar to that coalition in which Syria and Israel had already fought as allies at Karkar in 854. It is possible that the court party in Jerusalem was already committed to the opposite policy of an *entente* with Assyria; hence the plan of the allies included the overthrow of the Davidic dynasty and the seating of a nameless adventurer on the throne of Judah (Isa. vii. 6). In such an extremity Ahaz could no longer hesitate. He at once tendered his allegiance to Tiglath-pileser, who promptly responded to

[1] It was at one time supposed that the king referred to is Azariah (Uzziah) of Judah, a view which could hardly imply less than that Judah was the foremost military power in Syria at the time. But since the existence of a northern kingdom of Ya'udi has been clearly proved, there is no reasonable doubt that the inscription refers to it, in spite of the very remarkable coincidence of names.

his appeal (2 Kings xv. 29) for aid by ravaging the northern and eastern districts of Israel, putting Pekah to death, and exacting homage and tribute from the neighbouring countries of Philistia, Phœnicia, Ammon, Moab, Edom and certain tribes of Arabia. Damascus, thus bereft of support, was exposed to the full fury of Assyrian vengeance, and was finally incorporated in that empire in 732 (2 Kings xvi. 9). A permanent consequence of the Syro-Ephraimite raid was the loss to Judah of the port of Elath, which was captured by the Syrians and apparently handed over to the Edomites (2 Kings xvi. 6).

The pro-Assyrian policy adopted by Ahaz at this juncture was steadfastly maintained by him throughout his reign. To what extent it was injurious to the true interests of his kingdom we can hardly judge. It is certain that his appeal to Tiglath-pileser was no mere isolated act of homage, but involved a condition of vassalage coupled with the imposition of an annual tribute[1]. On the other hand there is no indication whatever that the Assyrians interfered in the internal government of the country, or that the tribute was so exorbitant as of itself to goad the nation into revolt. There is no doubt that the decision of Ahaz was based on a correct estimate of the international situation; and in so far as the choice lay between submission to Assyria and joining a coalition against it, we can see that he chose the less of two evils. The policy of absolute neutrality advocated by Isaiah was a dictate of faith in the divine government of the universe which seemed Utopian to the wisdom of secular statecraft, and its rejection causes little surprise. Its practical bearings will fall to be considered in another connexion (see pp. xxx f.). Politically the important fact is that at this time Judah as well as Israel came definitely within the sphere of Assyrian influence, and henceforth the destinies of both countries were bound up with their relations to that power.

Egypt. We now approach the time when Egyptian intrigue begins to play an increasingly important part in the politics of

[1] Judah is mentioned as a tributary state by Tiglath-pileser in 728, by Sargon in 711, and by Sennacherib in 701.

the Palestinian states; and it is necessary to turn for a little to the internal affairs of that empire. The twenty-second dynasty, founded by Sheshonq I (Shishak) the contemporary of Solomon and Rehoboam, had become extinct about the time of Tiglath-pileser's accession (745). Under the later kings of this dynasty the central authority was so weakened by civil strife and disorder that they exercised no effectual control over Palestine, although one of them had sent a small contingent to support Benhadad of Damascus at the battle of Karkar (854). During the twenty-third dynasty things went from bad to worse, "until there was at last an independent lord or petty king in every city of the Delta and up the river as far as Hermopolis" (Breasted, *History of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 365). Meanwhile there had grown up a strong semi-Egyptian state in Ethiopia, with its capital at Napata near the fourth cataract of the Nile. About the year 720 Piankhi the king of Ethiopia invaded Egypt with a large army, and having pushed his conquest beyond Memphis received the submission of all the petty princes, and was recognised as lord of Egypt. When he withdrew to celebrate his victory in Napata, the enfeebled twenty-third dynasty established a short-lived supremacy in Thebes; while the ruler of Sais (whose son Bocchoris became the only king of the twenty-fourth dynasty) succeeded in subduing the princes of the Delta, and setting up a kingdom of Lower Egypt which he ruled under the title of Pharaoh. At length, somewhere about 711, Shabaka the successor of Piankhi completed the conquest of Egypt, and founded the twenty-fifth dynasty, whose first three rulers—Shabaka (*c.* 711–700), Shabataka (700–688), and Taharka (688–663) maintained their power until the Assyrian invasion in 670. Into this imperfect framework of Egyptian history we shall have to fit several fragmentary notices of the Old Testament and of the cuneiform records.

The Fall of Samaria (*c.* 722). Tiglath-pileser IV died in 727, and was succeeded by his son[1] Shalmaneser V (727–722), whose

[1] But see Johns, *l.c.*, p. 111.

brief reign is memorable to us for the commencement of Samaria's struggle for freedom and independence. Here for the first time we detect Egyptian diplomacy at work. The last king of North Israel, Hoshea, a nominee of Tiglath-pileser in 735-4, entered into negotiations with Sewe[1] (So) king of Egypt; an Egyptian party was formed in Samaria, and ultimately gained the upper hand. Hoshea renounced his allegiance to Assyria, and Shalmaneser proceeded to crush him. The details of the invasion are obscure; but after a three years' siege Samaria was taken, 27,290 of its inhabitants were deported to Mesopotamia and Media, and the last fragment of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes was placed under the direct administration of Assyria. Judah was now coterminous with a province of the Assyrian empire. There is no evidence that it had been implicated in the rebellion.

Events in the reign of Sargon (722-705). During the siege of Samaria Shalmaneser had died, and was followed on the throne by Sargon, apparently a usurper, to whom the honours of the capture fell. In the very first year of his reign (721) he sustained a severe defeat at Dur-ilu from Humbanigash king of Elam, an ally of Merodach-baladan of Babylon. Immediately the smouldering disaffection in the western provinces burst out

[1] 2 Ki. xvii. 4.—It is no longer possible with our present knowledge to identify this Sewe with Shabaka the Ethiopian, whose reign over Egypt did not commence till several years later. He is probably identical with the Sib'i who is described in one of Sargon's inscriptions referring to the year 720 as the "turtan" (generalissimo) of Muṣri, and in another as the *turtan* of some one whose name has been obliterated but whom we may safely assume to be the "Pir'u king of Muṣri" named in another part of the former inscription. Setting aside the unproved and improbable theory that Muṣri here denotes a kingdom in north Arabia, it can hardly be questioned that the last-named personage is Pharaoh king of Egypt. This was most probably Bocchoris, or his father Tefnakhte of Sais, who, as we have seen, assumed the title of Pharaoh after the withdrawal of Piankhi (p. xiv). If all these identifications be correct we may recognise in Sewe one of the dynasts of the Delta who at one time posed as king of Egypt, but soon afterwards held the post of commander-in-chief under his more powerful rival the Pharaoh.

in a flame which threatened the loss of nearly the whole territory annexed by Tiglath-pileser and himself. Arpad, Hamath, Damascus, even Samaria, as well as the Philistine city of Gaza, were all in revolt, and again Egypt had a hand in the plot[1]. But in 720 Sargon marched westwards, crushing all opposition, and terminating a successful campaign by defeating the allied Philistine and Egyptian army at Raphia on the south-western frontier of Palestine.

The quiescence of Judah during these troubles may have been due to the consistent adherence of Ahaz to the policy he had marked out for himself in 735, although the influence of Isaiah must have been thrown heavily on the same side. In a prophecy assigned to the last year of Ahaz (xiv. 28—32) he warned the exultant Philistines that the power of Assyria was not broken. There is much uncertainty about the year of Ahaz's death and Hezekiah's accession (see *Chronological Note*, pp. lxxxi ff.), but if we assume the genuineness of this oracle and its superscription, none of the dates suggested for the death of Ahaz affords so good a setting for the prophecy as the year 720, when the recent change of dynasty in Assyria, combined with the news of the defeat at Dur-ilu, might well excite the hope of shaking off the foreign yoke. We may therefore venture the hypothesis that Ahaz reigned till 720, and that the adoption of an anti-Assyrian policy at Jerusalem coincided with the accession of Hezekiah. At all events, on the next occasion when there was unrest in Palestine we find Judah in Sargon's black list of disaffected countries along with Philistia, Edom, and Moab. In an inscription relating to the year 711 he says that these countries which "had to bring tribute and presents to Asshur my lord" had "meditated hostilities and plotted evil," and had "sent their tokens of homage to Pharaoh the king of Egypt[2], a prince who could not save them, and sought an

[1] It is in this connexion that we come across the first mention of Pir'u king of Muṣri, and the two allusions to Sib'i his *turtan* (see above p. xv *n.*).

[2] We take the "Pir'u king of Muṣri" here mentioned to be still

alliance with him." The focus of the conspiracy was the city of Ashdod, against which accordingly Sargon despatched an expedition under his Tartan or commander-in-chief (Isa. xx. 2). With the fall of that city the insurrection collapsed. Hezekiah seems to have withdrawn from the league in time to avoid the vengeance of Sargon. The Egyptian succour proved, as usual, unavailing.

Sennacherib's Invasion (701). Sennacherib succeeded his father Sargon in 705. The early years of his reign seemed to the advisers of Hezekiah a favourable opportunity to shake off the supremacy of Assyria. Egypt, now united under the sway of the Ethiopian kings of Napata, was prepared for a somewhat more vigorous intervention in the affairs of Palestine than she had recently been able to exercise[1]. It is possible, though far from certain, that the embassy of Merodach-baladan, recorded in ch. xxxix., belongs to this period. In any case Merodach-

Bocchoris of the twenty-fourth dynasty. It is no doubt possible that by 711 Shabaka had established himself as lord of all Egypt, and he might be thought to be the Pharaoh in question. But the negotiations to which Sargon refers must have taken place at least three years previously, and therefore fall within the interval between the retirement of Piankhi and the conquest by Shabaka. There is a stronger reason for refusing to identify Pir'u with Shabaka. In his narrative of the campaign Sargon tells of the flight of Yamani (the head of the anti-Assyrian faction at Ashdod) to Musri "in the region of Meluhha (Ethiopia)," and says that the king of Meluhha had delivered him up from fear of Sargon's majesty. The king of Ethiopia is thus clearly distinguished from the Pharaoh. The notice is just such as we might expect if at the time Shabaka was extending his conquests over the Nile valley: Yamani flees to that part of Egypt which lies towards Ethiopia, and there falls into the power of Shabaka. It is quite intelligible that Shabaka should have desired to postpone the inevitable conflict with Assyria, and been ready to keep on good terms with Sargon by the surrender of his rebellious vassal.—We may remark that it would be a very singular coincidence if in the *terra incognita* of N.W. Arabia there had been two kingdoms related to each other as Egypt and Ethiopia, and bearing Assyrian names which elsewhere denote Egypt and Ethiopia respectively.

[1] A striking illustration of her activity in fomenting rebellion is found in Isaiah's picturesque account of the arrival in Jerusalem of envoys from Napata during these critical days (ch. xviii.).

baladan, that irrepressible champion of Babylonian independence, who had already for twelve years (721–709) defied the power of Sargon and had been subdued with great difficulty, had once more established himself as king of Babylon ; and it was only after two hard-fought campaigns that Sennacherib could boast that he had "accomplished his destruction." In the meantime the whole of Palestine had risen in revolt. Buoyed up by hopes and promises of Egyptian support, and encouraged by Sennacherib's preoccupation with affairs nearer home, the Palestinian and Phœnician states once more leagued themselves together in a struggle for freedom : and in spite of Isaiah's remonstrances Judah was drawn into the coalition.

Having once taken the irrevocable step, Hezekiah acted with spirit and energy. We learn from Sennacherib's inscriptions that he strengthened the garrison of Jerusalem with a force of Arabian mercenaries. An indication of the important part he played in the confederacy is furnished by the fact that Padi, the Assyrian vassal-king of Ekron, who had been dethroned by his subjects, was sent to Jerusalem for safe custody. This dangerous pre-eminence made a reconciliation with Assyria impossible ; and so while other kings (as those of Ammon, Moab, and Edom) ultimately escaped by tendering their submission, Hezekiah had to expect the full fury of Sennacherib's vengeance.

It was not till his third campaign that Sennacherib was able to turn his attention to the West. The incidents of that famous expedition are recorded with great fulness on the so-called "Taylor-Prism" in the British Museum (col. ii. line 34 to col. iii. line 41), and somewhat more briefly on the winged bulls guarding the palace at Nineveh. In these official narratives the campaign is divided into four stages : (1) the subjugation of the Phœnician cities, (2) the chastisement of Ṣidḳa, king of Ashkelon, (3) the operations against Ekron, and (4) the invasion of Judah. The first two of these may be here passed over as not immediately bearing on our subject. (3) The people of Ekron, we have seen, had deposed their king Padi, and sent him in chains to Jerusalem. At the approach of the Assyrian

army "then heart was afraid"; but before Sennacherib could lay siege to the city he had to encounter a "force without number" of Egyptians and Ethiopians[1], which was marching to the relief of Ekron. The engagement took place at Eltekeh (Josh. xix. 44, xxi. 23); and Sennacherib claims the victory, although the record omits the enumeration of spoils which usually accompanies the accounts of decisive victories of Assyrian kings. The Egyptians, however, failed in their main object; Ekron was reduced, and stern punishment meted out to the ringleaders of the rebellion. In order to complete what he has to say about Ekron the annalist here relates the surrender of Padi by Hezekiah, and his restoration to the throne; but this belongs no doubt to a later stage of the campaign. (4) Next follows the account of the operations against Judah, which we here give in Sennacherib's own words. "And Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke—46 of his strongly fortified cities, and small towns in their vicinity without number, I besieged with the destruction of battering rams (?) and the attack of siege engines, the assault of...and...I captured. 200,150 people, young, old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and flocks without number, I brought out from their midst, and reckoned as spoil. Himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city. I threw up ramparts against him; and those who came out from the gate of his city I caused to return (?). His cities which I had plundered I separated from his land, and gave to Mitinti king of Ashdod, Padi king of Ekron, and Zil-bel king of Gaza, and diminished his land. To the former tribute, their yearly gift, I added the tribute due to my lordship, and imposed it upon them. Hezekiah himself was overwhelmed by the fear of the splendour of my lordship; the Arabs (Urbi) and his brave soldiers whom he had brought in for the defence of Jerusalem, his royal city, took to flight (?). With 30 talents of gold,

[1] "The commander of chariots and the sons of a king of Muṣri, along with the commander of chariots of the king of Meluḫḫa, I captured alive in the midst of the battle" (col. ii. lines 80–83).

800 talents of silver, I caused precious stones...great lapis-lazuli stones, ivory couches, ivory thrones, elephant-skin, ivory, ...-wood, ...-wood, all sorts of things, a huge treasure, as well as his daughters, his palace-dames, male and female musicians (?), to be brought after me to Nineveh, my royal city; and he sent his envoy (? rider) to pay tribute and render homage" (col. iii. ll. 11—41).

Let us now compare this circumstantial, and doubtless on the whole reliable, narrative with the short annalistic account of the campaign which is given in 2 Kings xviii. 13—16. It will be seen that there is substantial agreement between them. Both record the capture of the Jewish fortresses, the abject submission of Hezekiah, and the imposition of an enormous fine. The most striking points of difference are (*a*) that the Hebrew annalist says nothing of a siege of Jerusalem (which, however, Sennacherib himself does not claim to have resulted in capture); and (*b*) that the biblical account suggests that the tribute was paid at Lachish[1], while the Assyrian gives the impression that it was sent after Sennacherib to Nineveh. These are not irreconcilable differences, if we allow for the natural reticence of the Jewish historian (whose chief interest was obviously in the despoiling of the Temple), and for an equally natural tendency in the cuneiform record to enhance the success of the campaign.

The real difficulties emerge when we try to combine the Assyrian account with the long biographical passage which forms the sequel to 2 Kings xviii. 13—16, and is given separately in Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii. For the analysis of this passage we must refer to the notes on pp. 277 f., where it is shewn that it consists of a twofold narrative of an abortive attempt of Sennacherib, while

[1] The presence of Sennacherib at Lachish, although not expressly referred to in the account of the campaign, is confirmed by a relief in the British Museum, which represents Sennacherib on a throne receiving the submission of Lachish, and bears the inscription "Sennacherib, the king of the world, the king of Assyria, seated himself on a throne, whereupon the captives of Lachish came before him." See Handcock, *Latest Light on Bible Lands*, p. 151.

still at Lachish, to coerce Hezekiah into submission, in one account by a display of force, in the other by a threatening letter. The historical value of these narratives is variously estimated by different critics; but we find it impossible to doubt that the first of the two is in the main a trustworthy historical document. And although the second shews decided traces of legendary amplification, it contains elements which cannot be dismissed as purely fictitious. We must assume at least that in their main features, in which they agree, both rest on a basis of sound tradition. It is of the utmost importance for the understanding of Isaiah's attitude at the dramatic climax of his career that we should fit this tradition into its proper place in the actual historical situation.

The first question that arises is whether the blockade of Jerusalem mentioned by Sennacherib is to be identified with the expedition of the Rabshakeh in Isa. xxxvi., or whether the latter was a fresh attempt to secure possession of the capital after the first siege had been raised. The second view (which was adopted in previous editions of this commentary) requires us to suppose that Sennacherib was at first satisfied with Hezekiah's submission, and retired from Jerusalem, but that he afterwards changed his mind and demanded the capitulation of the city. Some considerations seem to favour this hypothesis. The expedition under the Rabshakeh is not described as amounting even to a blockade of Jerusalem, whereas Sennacherib distinctly says that he drew ramparts around it. Moreover it is conceivable that some change in the military situation, such as a reinforcement of the beaten Egyptian army, might have convinced Sennacherib that he had made a mistake in leaving so important a fortress unsubdued, and that he sought to rectify his error when too late by a threatening demonstration. But against this we have to set the improbability that the experienced staff of the Assyrian army would have made any such mistake. If Hezekiah's surrender had been the result of a siege we can hardly imagine that they would have relaxed their grip until the fortress was in their hands. And we may be sure from the

prominent part which Hezekiah had played in the rebellion, that Sennacherib would not have failed to press his advantage to the uttermost. These arguments may not be decisive; but they seem to have sufficient weight to incline the scale in favour of the simpler hypothesis that there was only one investment of Jerusalem, and that this did not precede the surrender of Hezekiah but followed it. We have to consider whether this theory will cover all the facts of the situation. Without pretending to examine all the possibilities that suggest themselves, we may conceive the course of events to have been somewhat as follows.

After the battle of Eltekeh and the capture of Ekron, Sennacherib proceeded to reduce the strong places of Judah in detail. While he himself with the main army besieged Lachish, overlooking the maritime Plain, he detached a corps under the Rabshakeh against Jerusalem. It is possible that this column encountered and dispersed Hezekiah's field army composed of the Arabian mercenaries who now deserted his cause (see on ch. xxii. 3). Hasty preparations for the defence of the city were made, as described in xxii. 8–11. But Hezekiah had already perceived the futility of resistance, and had sent envoys to Sennacherib at Lachish voluntarily tendering his submission. Negotiations resulted in an agreement to pay the tribute demanded by Sennacherib: whether it was actually paid at this time or later does not appear. Sennacherib's terms may have included the surrender of the capital; but this was a demand which policy and patriotism and religion alike impelled Hezekiah to refuse. If so, it is impossible to acquit Sennacherib of duplicity in accepting the tribute while still resolved to obtain the capitulation of Jerusalem. Meanwhile an Assyrian army was at the gates of the city threatening to take it by storm. In his extremity Hezekiah turned to Isaiah, whose vehement opposition to the adventurous schemes which had brought the nation to such a pass had never dulled his faith in God's purpose to interpose for the deliverance of the elect in Judah. Encouraged by his confident predictions (xxxvii. 6 f., 21—35)

that the enemy should not be permitted to inflict the smallest injury on Jerusalem, Hezekiah turned a deaf ear to the summons of the Assyrian general, and found in quietness and confidence his strength. The prophet's foresight was speedily and most signally verified. An outbreak of pestilence in his camp, coupled with disturbing rumours—whether of an Ethiopian advance or of renewed troubles in Babylon does not greatly matter—caused Sennacherib to beat a hasty retreat to his own land. Jerusalem was saved[1].

The political consequences of this providential arrest on the Assyrian enterprise, as read in the light of our fuller knowledge of history, may seem meagre and disappointing. It is known that Sennacherib survived the disaster for 20 years and during that time waged many successful wars. It is certain also that the deliverance did not permanently affect the relations of Judah to the Assyrian empire. The Assyrian monarchs still exacted their annual tribute from the kings of Jerusalem and treated them as their subjects. On the other hand it may be doubted if Sennacherib was able to enforce all the hard conditions which he imposed on Hezekiah at the time of his submission[2]. The very fact that during the remainder of his reign he never again appeared in Palestine, or renewed the attack on Egypt[3], is a proof that his policy was permanently altered by the reverse he had sustained. But if we measure the crisis by the spiritual interests that were at stake, we shall find that it

[1] For further details see the note on pp. 292 f.—It has been argued that the mention of Tirhakah as "king of Ethiopia" in xxxvii. 9 proves the narrative to be unhistorical, or at least to have no reference to the events of 701, because Tirhakah did not become king till about 688. But although this is true, Tirhakah seems to have been the controlling influence in Ethiopian politics in the two preceding reigns, and would naturally be the commander of an Ethiopian army in 701. Since the narrative cannot have been written till after the death of Sennacherib (681) it is quite intelligible that the writer should have designated Tirhakah by the title by which he was already known to history.

[2] See above, p. xix.

[3] On the theory of a later expedition of Sennacherib against Palestine and Arabia, see below, pp. xlv ff.

possesses an importance that cannot be over-estimated. Judah was then saved from seemingly inevitable political extinction. If Sennacherib had attained his object the people would have been led into captivity (see ch. xxxvi. 17), Israel would have perished as a nation, and with it the hopes on which the religious future of humanity depended would have been lost. That this result was averted was due to the inspiration which guided Isaiah throughout his life, and to the providential interposition which crowned his prophecies with their fulfilment. The events of 701 form, therefore, a fitting close to the public career of the great prophet, who from this time vanishes from the stage of history.

II.

The Life and Work of Isaiah.

Of Isaiah's early life very little knowledge can be gathered from his writings. He was born, as we have seen, in the reign of Uzziah; and he must have been still a young man, though probably married, when in the year of that king's death he received his call to the prophetic office. His father Amoz[1] appears to have been a citizen of Jerusalem, within whose walls, so far as we know, the prophet's whole public activity was confined; and from his intimate and loving familiarity with its topography we may perhaps infer that his youth was spent there. His father's social position cannot be determined, although Isaiah's close contact with the governing circles of the nation, as well as a certain aristocratic bent of mind which appears in his writings, lend plausibility to the conjecture that he belonged to a good family, and had the instincts of a patrician in his blood. Nor can much be said of the religious

[1] The fancied resemblance of this name to that of the prophet Amos (which does not exist in Hebrew) misled some Greek writers into the baseless opinion that the younger prophet was the son of the older. Equally baseless is the Jewish tradition that Amoz was a brother of king Amaziah, and Isaiah consequently a member of the royal house of Judah.

influences that moulded his youthful character. His name, in Hebrew *Yĕsha'yāhû* ("Yahwe is salvation"), had doubtless a symbolic significance to his own mind as expressing a cardinal principle of his ministry (viii. 18); but it was not uncommon, at least in later times[1], and therefore cannot be safely appealed to as evidence of the religious attitude of his parents. The great earthquake in the days of Uzziah (Amos i. 1; Zech. xiv. 5) must have made an ineffaceable impression on his mind, and may have furnished the imagery for the powerful description of the great Day of Jehovah in one of his earliest discourses (ii. 12 ff.). And this reminds us of one important element which went to the formation of Isaiah's thought. For two years before this earthquake Amos had appeared at Bethel with a message of doom which sent a thrill of horror through the whole northern kingdom (Amos vii. 10). His work in North Israel was continued by Hosea, whose career ran parallel with that of Isaiah for perhaps a decade. The influence of these prophets can be traced in the earlier writings of Isaiah, and it is reasonable to suppose that even before his own call his mind was imbued with those great prophetic ideas which it was his life-work to unfold.

It was amid the forebodings naturally created by the demise of Uzziah that Isaiah became conscious of his prophetic vocation. The statement that he first saw the Lord "in the year that king Uzziah died" had more than chronological interest. The aged monarch, who had so well upheld the power of the state, was either just dead or else in the last stages of leprosy. The recent history of Samaria furnished an ominous warning of the troubles that might follow the removal of a capable ruler at such a time; and it may be that Isaiah had a presentiment of the anarchy and confusion into which the nation might be plunged by the death of Uzziah (cf. iii. 1 ff.). The significance of the vision of ch. vi. becomes more intelligible to our minds if we regard it as the answer to apprehensions such as these. At

[1] 1 Chr. xxv. 3, 15, xxvi. 25, iii. 21; Ezra viii. 7, 19; Neh. xi. 7. It also occurs in the Elephantine papyri.

a time when his thoughts were occupied with the decease of a sovereign whom he had revered as the embodiment of wise statesmanship, there was granted to Isaiah a revelation of Him who was the true divine King of Israel; and at the same time he gained a perception of the issues of Jehovah's dealings with the people which enabled him to face the threatening future with confidence and hope.

The spiritual truths impressed on the prophet's mind by this memorable experience are those which we shall see unfolded throughout his whole subsequent ministry. An exposition of these truths in their connexion will be attempted in a later chapter. For the present it is enough to say that the vision left on Isaiah's mind an abiding sense of the reality of Jehovah's power and presence in the midst of His people, and the consciousness of a life-long mission to be discharged in His service. His eyes had seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. The alacrity with which he offered himself for this work, without knowing in the least what it might involve, is an indication of the ardent temperament of the man, which contrasts strikingly with the hesitation of another prophet at a similar moment in his experience (ch. vi. 8; cf. Jer. i. 6).

It must have been soon after the inaugural vision that a son was born to Isaiah whom he named *Shĕār-Yāshûb* ("Remnant will turn"), thus giving expression to a distinctive element of his teaching, viz. the conviction that there was in Israel an indestructible spiritual kernel which would survive the impending judgement, and form the nucleus of the new people of God. That Isaiah quickly gained a hearing, and made good his position as the exponent of a definite religious conception of national policy is clearly apparent from several incidents of his first appearance in public life in 735 (vii. 1 ff., viii. 2, 3, 18).

It is convenient to divide Isaiah's ministry into four periods, which although very unequal in length are marked each by features peculiar to itself. (i) The first period extends from the death of Uzziah to the beginning of the reign of Ahaz. (ii) The second is the critical time of the Syro-Ephraimite

invasion, about 735. (iii) In the third the centre of interest is the fall of Samaria, in 721. (iv) The fourth is the period of anti-Assyrian intrigue at Jerusalem, culminating in the invasion and deliverance of the year 701.

i. The prophecies commonly assigned to the first period are found chiefly in ch. i.—v.; but to these must be added ch. ix. 8—21 (of which ch. v. 25—30 is the conclusion), and probably xxxii. 9—14. In these we have a well-defined body of prophetic teaching, having a general resemblance to the book of Amos, and representing clearly the character of Isaiah's early ministry. Like Amos, Isaiah appears here mainly as a preacher of righteousness and judgement to come. The two themes which form the burden of his message are (*a*) the sin of Israel, and (*b*) the certainty of national disaster.

(*a*) We have already seen that the social state of Judah was very similar to that of North Israel in the days of Amos, and Isaiah deals with the evils of the age in the spirit of his predecessor. If we may trust a probable arrangement of the discourses his criticism becomes more incisive and discriminating as time goes on. At first (in ch. ii.) his attention is directed to the outstanding evidences of ungodliness and worldly pride in the still prosperous country of Judah. Idolatry, superstition, trust in wealth and warlike resources—these familiar features of the nation's life are to the vision of the prophet, purified by contact with the Holy One of Israel, so many symptoms of the irreligious spirit of his contemporaries. Somewhat later (ch. iii.) he touches on social evils, the oppression and injustice practised by the rich and powerful on the poor (*vv.* 9, 14, 15), and the luxurious fashions of the women of Jerusalem (*vv.* 16 ff.). In a still later prophecy (ch. v. 8—24) he comes to close quarters with the sins of action and of thought characteristic of the upper class, denouncing in a series of "woes" their violations of the rights of property in the lawless extension of landed estates (8—10), their drinking festivities (11, 12, 22), their unjust judgements (23), and (coming to more spiritual sins) their heedlessness of Jehovah's working (12), mocking and defiant scepticism (19),

and perversion of moral distinctions (20). In ch. i. we find an additional echo of Amos in the exposure of the prevalent delusion that Jehovah could be propitiated by costly and elaborate ritual service without regard to the character and conduct of the worshippers (*vv.* 10—17). The corrective to this religious error is given in the parable of the vineyard (ch. v. 1–7, cf. iii. 14), which expresses the fundamental prophetic doctrine that Jehovah "looks for judgement...and righteousness" in the nation which He has chosen for His own. There is perhaps one respect in which Isaiah's treatment of national sins is more profound than that of Amos: he appears to trace all the manifestations of national corruption to a single source in the absence of a religious spirit, or the knowledge of God, in the men of his time. Here we perceive the influence of the vivid impression of the glory of God which he himself experienced at the moment of his call.

(*b*) The descriptions of the coming judgement that occur in this cycle of prophecies exhibit all the qualities of Isaiah's powerful and versatile genius. His very earliest recorded utterance contains a sublime vision of the "day of Jehovah," as a day of earthquake and thunder, when "all that is proud and lofty" in nature or human civilisation shall be humbled before the glory of Jehovah's majesty (ch. ii. 12 ff.). Again he pictures Jehovah as appearing in person to judge the rulers of His people (iii. 14), or he sees Him standing with outstretched hand to smite the sinful kingdom of the North (ix. 12, 17 etc.). But Isaiah's strong sense of historic reality leads him to throw out more realistic descriptions of the judgement than these. Thus in ch. iii. 1—7 he conceives it as taking the shape of a period of revolutionary anarchy in the Judean state, such as he had already witnessed in Ephraim (ix. 14 ff.). And although he does not yet mention the Assyrians by name, it is plain from v. 26—30 that he has them in view as the human instruments of Jehovah's vengeance.

The eschatological element of Isaiah's teaching, however, is as yet simple and undeveloped, although clearly present. He looks for a purification of the state from its base and worthless

elements and a restoration of the best times of the old monarchy (i. 24—26). Of the ideal age beyond the judgement we have two pictures in ii. 2—4 and iv. 2—6, although it is not certain that either of these passages belongs to Isaiah's spoken message of this period.

ii. (See ch. ix. 8—21, v. 25—30, xvii. 1—11, vii., viii.; perhaps also ix. 1—7.) The second phase of Isaiah's ministry exhibits him in an entirely new character, that, namely, of a political adviser. In order to appreciate the importance of this fact we have only to look at the contrast which in this respect he presents to Amos and Hosea in the North. These prophets held the same fundamental convictions as Isaiah; they looked forward to a blessed future for Israel after the work of judgement was completed; yet their writings contain no hint of political direction for the leaders of the state. They take up a negative attitude towards the problems of statesmanship; it must have seemed that the breach between Jehovah and His people was so absolute that no guidance or counsel could be obtained through the medium of the prophetic word. Now it is one of Isaiah's chief distinctions that he revived this political function of prophecy which had been in abeyance since the time of Elisha. Without descending from the high spiritual level to which prophecy had been raised by the work of Amos and Hosea, he was able from that standpoint to formulate a definite religious policy by which the nation might be safely guided through the dangers that lay immediately before it.

The fundamental maxims of Isaiah's statesmanship come first to light in the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitic invasion, in the memorable interview with Ahaz, recorded in ch. vii. The prophet had already announced (in ch. xvii. 1—11) the issue of the ill-fated alliance between Syria and Ephraim. By its unbrotherly attack on Judah (see ch. ix. 21) the Northern Kingdom had sealed its own doom; and both it and Syria must speedily fall a prey to the advancing Assyrians. He hoped also that a respite would be granted to Judah; and it was with the view of securing that this interval should be taken advantage of

in the highest interests of religion that he sought, under divine direction, a personal meeting with the king. His main concern was to dissuade Ahaz from seeking to save himself from a passing danger by placing himself under the protection of Assyria. He represented the trivial nature of the momentary peril; and urged the king with all the weight of his inspired authority to adopt an attitude of wise passivity, renouncing all trust in earthly help and dubious political expedients, and relying on Jehovah alone to bring a good result out of the present crisis. How eager he was to bring the king round to a right mind he shewed by the offer of a miraculous sign in confirmation of his right to speak in the name of Jehovah. But it was all in vain. Ahaz had probably already taken his own line, and he refused to be turned aside by the fervid appeal of the prophet.

It is a disputed point whether the course recommended by Isaiah or that actually adopted by Ahaz was the path of wisdom at such a juncture. There has been a tendency in recent criticism to maintain that the advice given by Isaiah displayed "no less political sagacity than elevation of faith"; that the inspiration under which he spoke was little else than his sure diagnosis of the diplomatic situation, which convinced him that without any overtures from Judah Tiglath-pileser would in his own interest have crushed the effort of Syria and Ephraim, so that by quiet reserve Ahaz would have reaped all the advantage of Assyrian succour without compromising the independence of his country. Against this it is urged[1] with truth that Isaiah's counsel had nothing to do with political calculations, but was based partly on a religious objection to alliances with heathen powers, and partly on his assurance that Jehovah was about to intervene decisively in the affairs of the world; hence it is concluded that judged by the maxims of secular statesmanship the line followed by Ahaz was that which any wise ruler would have chosen in the circumstances. But the difference between the

[1] See Welch, *Religion of Israel*, pp. 158 ff.

two policies, measured on the plane of political expediency, seems to reduce itself to the question whether an attitude of bare neutrality would have served the national interest better than a voluntary acceptance of Assyrian suzerainty. That is a question which we are hardly in a position to answer. We do not know how Isaiah's advice would have worked out in practical politics. We cannot say for certain that Assyria would have interfered in time to prevent Judah from being forced into the coalition, or that Tiglath-pileser, if left to himself, would have respected the autonomy of Judah more fully than he actually did. The real difference of the two policies lay in the sphere of religion. Isaiah had called on Ahaz to acknowledge the hand of Jehovah in this crisis of history, and to trust in Him alone for deliverance from the immediate danger to his kingdom. It was therefore a demand, not for acceptance of one political judgement rather than another, but for faith in the unseen divine power that rules the universe; and it was the failure of Ahaz to respond to this appeal which seemed to Isaiah so ominous for the future of his people.

Isaiah, however, did not accept the decision of Ahaz as the final response of the nation to his message. From the court he appealed to the people at large, in the series of oracles contained in ch. viii., extending probably over a period of several months. By two symbolic acts he endeavoured to fix indelibly in the public mind the central fact on which his reading of the political situation hinged, viz., the speedy destruction of Syria and Ephraim by the king of Assyria. For this purpose he first caused a placard to be affixed, with legal formalities, in a conspicuous position, bearing the inscription "To Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (viii. 1, 2). Then some months afterwards he gave the interpretation of the motto, in connexion with the birth of a son, in whose name he embodied the idea which at the time was of paramount importance in his work. "For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria" (*vv.* 3, 4). But

neither amongst the people did he find any general acceptance of his message. On every hand he was confronted by evidences of religious insensibility and confirmed unbelief. It was his first experience on a large scale of the truth revealed to him in his inaugural vision, that the effect of his mission would be to produce judicial blindness and hardness of heart in those whom he addressed. The prophet recognised that his generation had passed through a spiritual ordeal from which it emerged with a gloomier destiny and a more certain looking for of judgement than under better auspices might have awaited it.

The forecast of coming events which Isaiah published at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war was remarkably verified in the subsequent history of Judah. It is true that it contains features which were not exactly fulfilled. Probably none of the events foretold took place quite so soon as Isaiah had anticipated. The overthrow of Damascus took place in 732, that of Samaria ten years later. So again the Assyrian invasion of Judah did not happen within at most 10 or 12 years, as Isaiah appears to have expected, but was postponed for more than a generation. The land of Judah was not the theatre of the contest between Egypt and Assyria for the mastery of Asia, as seems to be assumed in vii. 18, 19. But these are matters of detail which do not affect the substantial truth of the prediction, and they are modified in later utterances of Isaiah. The broad fact remains that Isaiah's public attitude at this time was based on a foreknowledge of the course of events which could not have been reached by any estimate of political probabilities. The immediate danger proved to be as trivial and evanescent as he declared it to be, while the fatal results of the course chosen by Ahaz, though deferred for a time, were experienced in the disasters of Sennacherib's invasion.

We have yet to notice the incident which closes this chapter of the prophet's history (viii. 16—18). The rejection of his message by the people seems to have led to a temporary cessation of his public activity; and he marks his sense of the importance of the event by a singular action, which is described

as "binding up the testimony and sealing the instruction among his disciples." The expressions are obscure; but the most natural supposition is that they refer to some record of the prophecies delivered during the late crisis, which Isaiah solemnly sealed in presence of his "disciples," as a protest against the unbelief of the nation. Jehovah now "hideth his face from the house of Israel," i.e. he withdraws the guidance of the prophetic word which had been so coldly received. It remains for the prophet, and those who share his faith, to wait for the fulfilment of his word, and he appears by this act to separate himself and his adherents from the mass of their contemporaries and to form a new circle of religious fellowship based on faith in the revelation which Jehovah had given through himself. It is certain at any rate that at this time of general unbelief there was a band of men known as "disciples" of Isaiah; and it may well be that the fact so vaguely indicated, represents the most influential phase of his activity. The history of religions shews that the most enduring of all spiritual influences are those communicated through the close fellowship of a great personality with a limited number of susceptible minds, or in short through the relation of master and disciples. It would be no surprise to find this principle exemplified in the career of Isaiah. It is but the practical development of his fundamental conception of a spiritual kernel within the nation; the "remnant" that should "turn" was being formed under his eyes in the persons of the men who at this time began to detach themselves from an untoward generation and gather round him for inspiration and instruction.

iii. The Fall of Samaria (721) is foretold in several of Isaiah's most striking prophecies (v. 26—30, viii. 1—4, xvii. 1—11, xxviii. 1—4). It is remarkable that none of these can with positive certainty be assigned to the interval between *c.* 733 and 721: the only one which may possibly have been composed during these years is xxviii. 1—4, and even it might with almost equal probability be dated before 735. Equally strange is the absence of any express record of Isaiah's reflexions on the

event, the only reference to it being in the speech put into the mouth of the king of Assyria in x. 9, 11. It is doubtful therefore if after the Syro-Ephraimite raid Isaiah broke his silence until the year of Ahaz's death (xiv. 28). Unfortunately this, as we have seen, is one of the disputed dates of Jewish history. If Ahaz died in 727, then Isaiah had resumed his public activity six years before the capture of Samaria. If the reign of Ahaz lasted till 720 there is no sure evidence that Isaiah's silence was broken even by so momentous an event as the destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

Yet the fate of Samaria must have profoundly affected the public mind in Judah; and it would be surprising if it did not give a new direction to Isaiah's own thoughts of the future. The extinction of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, the larger and stronger member of Jehovah's people, was the most impressive vindication that had as yet occurred of the prophetic interpretation of providence, and in particular of the truth of Isaiah's predictions. The proud boast of the Assyrian: "Shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her images?": must have echoed a misgiving in the hearts of the people of Judah. If Jehovah had failed to avert the doom of Israel, what assurance was there any longer that He would or could protect Judah? It may be that such questionings had something to do with the spirit of revolt which soon afterwards lent a ready ear to projects of rebellion, and finally plunged the nation into a desperate struggle to throw off the Assyrian yoke. The problem which presented itself to Isaiah was of a different kind. He had foreseen the downfall of Samaria, and he had likewise anticipated a further judgement in store for Judah. But his conception of that judgement underwent a certain modification which we shall have to consider more fully when we come to the next stage of his activity. We shall then see that a new element, which had not appeared in any earlier utterance of his, was introduced into his view of the providential mission of Assyria (see pp. xxxvii ff.). With growing clearness he announced the necessity of the annihilation of that

empire as involved in the divine plan for the establishment of the true kingdom of God. Although the first explicit statement of this change of attitude belongs to a later time, and need not therefore be dwelt upon here, we may reasonably believe that it was determined to some extent by the prophet's nearer observation of the ruthless tyranny of Assyrian rule, as seen in the subjugated province of Samaria.

iv. We come now to the last and most eventful stage of Isaiah's career, when he stood apparently alone in opposition to the anti-Assyrian party which gained the ascendancy in the royal council. It is impossible to assign a definite beginning to this phase of the prophet's activity. Perhaps the first trace of disaffection towards Assyria in Jerusalem is found in the short oracle of xiv. 29—32, which we take to have been delivered in 720, the year of Hezekiah's accession. Isaiah's emphatic warning to the Philistines, and the obscure allusion to a Philistine embassy in Jerusalem (*v.* 32), may shew that a proposal to join the confederacy that was then being formed against Assyria had a better prospect of success than it would have had under the regime of Ahaz. We have seen, however, that Judah was not drawn into the insurrectionary movement of that time.

The first overt act of disloyalty on the part of Hezekiah is seen in the negotiations with Egypt which preceded the revolt of Ashdod in 711 (see pp. xvi f.). It has been suggested, with some shew of plausibility, that some or all of Isaiah's fulminations against an Egyptian alliance contained in ch. xxviii.—xxxi. belong to this period and not, as has generally been supposed, to the reign of Sennacherib[1]. In any case they express

[1] There are no quite decisive arguments for either view. Sargon in 711 has much to say about treasonable negotiations with Egypt on the part of the Palestinian states, while there is no explicit mention of such transactions in Sennacherib's account of the campaign of 701. At the same time it is certain that they took place, and on the whole the probability is that the prophecies in question refer to the later period. It is possible that the treaty formed about 714 was never abrogated and did not require formal renewal under Sennacherib. See further the note on p. 240.

the view which Isaiah must have taken of the clandestine intercourse with Egypt which certainly took place about 714, and their import may conveniently be considered here. We note, as an evidence of the prophet's political influence, the anxiety of the conspirators to keep him in the dark with regard to their plot (xxix. 15, xxx. 1). In this they did not succeed; Isaiah's vigilance unmasked their design, and he was able to follow the negotiations with reiterated warnings. On one occasion we find him engaged in an altercation with the leaders of the war party, whom he had apparently surprised at a carousal held to celebrate what they called a "covenant with death and an agreement with the underworld" (xxviii. 7 ff.). More than once he satirises the craft and subtlety on which the conspirators prided themselves as an attempt to outwit the Almighty (xxix. 15, xxx. 1—12, xxxi. 1, 2). A parting glimpse of the ill-fated enterprise is probably given in xxx. 6, 7, where the prophet pictures the heavily laden caravan making its way across the desert with presents to the potentates of the Nile valley. Isaiah's protest was therefore unavailing.

The dated prophecy of ch. xx. shews that Isaiah resorted to still more drastic methods of turning public opinion against rebellion. For three years he walked the streets of Jerusalem "naked and barefoot" as a sign of the humiliation which awaited not only Egypt but the distant Ethiopia at the hands of the Assyrians. To understand this extraordinary symbolic action we must suppose that at the beginning of the conspiracy Isaiah in a moment of excited denunciation of it had thrown off his upper garment and declared that he would not resume his ordinary attire until his prediction was fulfilled by the suppression of the revolt. The fulfilment may have been delayed beyond his expectation; but he held to his belief and kept his vow, until at length the capture of Ashdod by Sargon's general stamped out the rebellion and gave a momentary check to anti-Assyrian intrigue at the Judean court.

We thus see that Isaiah consistently upheld the maxim that the safety of the state lay in abstinence from all attempts to

recover its independence and in quiet resignation to the will of Jehovah. There is no reason to believe that he ever entertained the hope that by following this course Judah would be spared the trial of an Assyrian invasion. That great act of judgement was irrevocably decreed by Jehovah, and could not be averted by any line of policy however prudent or even religious it might be. His purpose was to bring about a right religious disposition on the part of the rulers and the people, so that when the judgement came its salutary effects might be experienced on as wide a scale as possible. With this object in view he counselled a patient acceptance of the irksome political situation in which Judah was placed, and above all an attitude of neutrality in the repeated struggles which were made by the surrounding nations against Assyria. This of course was on the surface a very different line of action from that which he had urged on Ahaz in 735. Then he sought to prevent Ahaz from entering into an alliance with Tiglath-pileser, involving a dishonourable subjection to the Assyrian empire. Now, under Hezekiah, he sets his face against all schemes for breaking that subjection by alliance with Egypt or any other power opposed to Assyria. But the religious motive in both cases was the same, viz. his antipathy to the spirit of unbelief which he discovered in all attempts to effect political salvation by human wisdom and the help of heathen states.

It is important to observe that down to the year 711 Isaiah contemplated a great extension of Assyrian conquest. The subjugation of Egypt and Ethiopia (ch. xx.) could not come about in a day, and when the prophet uttered that prediction he cannot have looked for an immediate termination to the proud and victorious career of Assyria. This fact has to be noticed because of a certain modification of Isaiah's outlook in the next discourse to which our attention must be directed.

It must have been at some time between 710 and 701 that Isaiah first found occasion to set forth his inspired convictions as to the mission of Assyria and the limits assigned to it in Jehovah's eternal purpose. This was a theme which had never

yet been handled from the point of view of prophecy. Both Amos and Hosea had indeed recognised in Assyria the instrument of judgement on the sin of Israel. But neither of them had been led to think of the problem presented by Jehovah's use of a human instrument which scorned His authority and obeyed no law but its own savage lust of plunder and destruction. It was a question, however, which could not fail to engage the thought of Isaiah, as he marked the unresting advance of Assyria towards universal dominion, and became aware of the ruthless and impious spirit which animated the masters of its irresistible legions. How could an immoral force be used for moral ends? When and where and how would the Assyrian overstep the limits of his commission, and appear in open conflict with the will of Him who had raised him up? And when that point was reached, how would Jehovah rid Himself of the formidable tool which He had fashioned to execute His strange work on the earth? This is the subject treated in ch. x. 5—34, a passage which although apparently composed of several discourses (see pp. 91 f.) nevertheless possesses a fundamental unity of thought, and as a whole forms one of the most suggestive contributions to the religious interpretation of history in all literature. The contrast between Jehovah's purpose in raising up Assyria and the unholy ambitions by which that power was animated is exhibited in vivid dramatic language (*vv.* 5– 15); and the sudden annihilation of that imposing display of earthly pomp and strength is foretold under the lurid metaphors of disease and conflagration (*vv.* 16—19). Then follow words of encouragement addressed to the faithful remnant in Israel (*vv.* 20 27); and the section closes with an imaginary description of the attack of Assyria on Jerusalem and its destruction under the walls of the city (*vv.* 28—34). The final trespass of the Assyrian is conceived as taking the form of an assault on the inviolable seat of Jehovah's earthly government in Jerusalem. As he stands over against the capital "swinging his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion" (*v.* 32), a destructive blow will be dealt to him: "the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, shall lop

the boughs with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the lofty shall be humbled" (*v.* 33). Thus after Assyria has proved the impotence of all other gods by destroying in succession the peoples that served and trusted in them, the breaking of its power on the soil of Palestine will reveal to the world the divinity of Jehovah, and vindicate the truth that its whole career had been controlled and guided to this issue by the Holy One of Israel.

This expectation of a great and speedy disaster to the Assyrian arms appears in other prophecies of this period: see ch. xiv. 24—27, xvii. 12—14, and especially the striking oracle of ch. xviii., addressed to the ambassadors from Ethiopia who at this time visited Jerusalem. It became one of the sustaining motives of Isaiah's ministry during the critical months of the invasion, a time of unprecedented activity on the part of the prophet, when the leading principles of his teaching stand out with singular clearness and force. He felt that the hour of decisive conflict between Jehovah and the world-power was at hand; and he believed that in the last extremity Jerusalem would be saved by the intervention of the Almighty (xxix. 7 f., xxxi. 5). This thought finds expression in xxxi. 8 f.; and still more powerfully in an imaginative picture of the judgement on Assyria in xxx. 27—33, which, however, cannot be very confidently ascribed to Isaiah (see p. 248). The crisis of Jerusalem's fate becomes the occasion of that final revelation of the majesty of God to which Isaiah had looked forward from the beginning of his work, and which he had with increasing distinctness connected with the overthrow of the Assyrian power. The whole history of redemption converges to this one event; it is the consummation of Jehovah's work of judgement both on Israel and on Assyria, and the inauguration of the reign of holiness and righteousness and peace reserved for the purified remnant of the nation.

Here, however, we touch on the most difficult problem of Isaiah's ministry. In the discourses usually assigned to the Sennacherib period (the genuine parts of ch. xxviii.—xxxii.), two ideas cross each other which it is not easy to harmonise.

On the one hand the threat of a judgement in which Jerusalem will be reduced to the utmost distress and humiliation, and on the other the expectation of a signal deliverance. How are these two ideas related to the annihilation of the Assyrian power predicted in the prophecies just referred to? Does Isaiah still, as at an earlier stage of his career (cf. v. 14, 17), look on Assyria as the organ of the final chastisement, or does he now expect that the Assyrian army will be destroyed before its meditated assault on Jerusalem can be carried out? The anti-Assyrian prophecies (see especially x. 28 - 34) seem to point to the latter conclusion. At the opposite extreme ch. xxxii. 9—14 clearly announces the devastation of the capital; and this point of view is so irreconcilable with the other that the passage must probably be assigned to the same early period as ch. v. 14, 17. Other prophecies (xxviii. 17—22, xxx. 12—17, xxxi. 3) are directly connected with the denunciation of the Egyptian alliance; and we have seen that these also may possibly date from a time when Isaiah had not reached his later conviction of the destruction of Assyria. Even if (as is more probable) they belong to the reign of Sennacherib, they only predict the ruin of the politicians who were responsible for these intrigues, and may still be earlier than x. 28—34. There remain two oracles (xxix. 1—8, xxxi. 4, 5) in which the threat of judgement is directed against the city itself; and there threatening and promise are so blended that it is difficult to determine whether the miraculous deliverance averts or follows the capture of Jerusalem. We must defer further discussion of this question till we come to consider the import of Isaiah's doctrine of the inviolability of Zion in the next section (pp. lxvii ff.). For the present we assume the truth of the conclusion that during this crisis Isaiah arrived at the conviction that the Assyrians would not set foot in Jerusalem[1].

[1] The tendency of much recent criticism has been to solve the problem by denying the genuineness of all the hopeful predictions in xxviii.—xxxii., and leaving only those of a minatory character as representing Isaiah's real attitude during the invasion. But that

We have thus traced Isaiah's action up to the eve of the actual siege of Jerusalem. For what follows we are dependent on the historical appendix to the book (ch. xxxvi., xxxvii. = 2 Kings xviii. 17–37, xix.), and the oracles imbedded there. We are at once struck by a change that has passed over the prophet's attitude. The threatening note which was so prominent up to this point has wholly disappeared; his tone is one of serene confidence, and his message is an unconditional assurance of the failure of Sennacherib's enterprise. It is not so difficult as it might appear to account for this alteration in Isaiah's demeanour. The demand for the surrender of Jerusalem had a most salutary effect on the disposition of Hezekiah, and no doubt on the court and the populace as well. The king recognised the hopeless plight in which his crooked policy had landed him and, thoroughly humbled, throws himself on the protection of Jehovah and the guidance of His prophet. On the other hand the arrogance and perfidy of Sennacherib and his blasphemous defiance of the God of Israel, had put him in the wrong; he had committed the crowning offence against the majesty of Jehovah which Isaiah had foreseen. He felt therefore that the time of Judah's chastisement was past, and that of Sennacherib's humiliation had arrived. All that remained

tempting expedient lands us in greater difficulties than those which it seeks to avoid. If Isaiah had confidently foretold the fall of Jerusalem before the Assyrians, it would be impossible to account for the rise of the legend which makes him the hero of the resistance which ultimately saved the capital from capitulation (xxxvi., xxxvii.). It is true that he was bitterly disappointed by the spiritual result of the great deliverance; but he could hardly have written ch. xxii. 1–14 if his disappointment had been that of a man whose whole anticipation had been falsified by the turn of events. Moreover the genuineness of the purely anti-Assyrian oracles is disputed by almost no one; and it is more difficult to reconcile such an expectation with an attitude of blank despair regarding the future of Jerusalem than it is to harmonise the prophet's seemingly conflicting utterances of judgement and salvation. The problem is mainly a psychological one, and is not to be solved by literary criticism. For the rest we must refer to the notes on these chapters in the commentary.—On the theory of a second expedition of Sennacherib against Palestine about ten years later, see below, pp. xlv ff.

for him to do was to sustain the faith and courage of Hezekiah with the assurance that Jehovah was with him in his refusal to submit to the demands of Sennacherib. It is not necessary here to follow the details of the narrative. What is most remarkable in the oracles of this time is the sobriety of the prediction on which Isaiah based his encouragement to resistance. He drops no hint of the frightful catastrophe which was to check the advance of Assyria in that region for a whole generation. He simply announces that the Assyrian shall "hear a rumour and return to his own land," there to perish by the sword (xxxvii. 7), that "by the way that he came by the same he shall return," without having so much as "shot an arrow" against Jerusalem (*vv.* 29, 33, 34 f.). All this was strictly and literally fulfilled, and seems to suggest that as the event drew near Isaiah's prognostications became more realistic, less figurative, and more in accord with actual historical fact. But the sudden and terrible calamity which overwhelmed the army of Sennacherib answered in some degree to the most dramatic of his earlier prophecies (x. 33 f., xiv. 24 ff., xvii. 12 ff., xviii. 3 ff., [xxx. 27 ff.]) and proved that Isaiah had been inspired with a foreknowledge which no calculation of probabilities could have attained.

The comparative moderation of Isaiah's last utterances must not lead us to underestimate the heroism of faith which enabled him to stand out at this juncture as the saviour of his country. The political risks of the course he advocated were indeed tremendous; for a renewed defiance of Assyria must have seemed to all human sagacity a perfectly desperate step. Yet with this in view Isaiah never wavered. When all around him were paralysed with fear his confidence remained unshaken, and in the crisis of his people's fate he boldly urged the king to stake everything on his conviction that the city would be saved. His success in this last emergency, after so many defeats at the hands of an unbelieving nation and its rulers, was an event which has had "more influence on the life of subsequent generations than all the conquests of Assyrian kings; for it assured

the permanent vitality of that religion which was the cradle of Christianity[1]." For it is clear to us, whether the fact was present to the mind of Isaiah or not, that the spiritual religion which lay in germ in his teaching was not as yet capable of existing apart from the nationality in which it was born; so that if Jerusalem had then been surrendered or captured all that had been gained by the work of Isaiah and earlier prophets must have been lost to mankind.

There remains one recorded utterance of Isaiah which sheds an unexpected light on the prophet's feelings in the hour of his triumph. It is the difficult prophecy of ch. xxii. 1—14, which, if we have rightly understood the sequence of events (pp. xx ff.), must refer to an incident that followed the raising of the siege of Jerusalem. To Isaiah's mind that was a time when "the Lord Jehovah of hosts called to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth" (*v.* 12). But instead of this it was the occasion of a senseless outburst of mirth and festivity which astounded the prophet, and for the moment obliterated from his mind the vision of a happy future. Heedless of the late disasters and the humiliating conditions of peace, the city kept holiday in honour of its deliverance; the housetops were crowded with spectators watching the departure of the Assyrian army, and universal hilarity expressed the prevalent sentiment: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die" (*v.* 13). Isaiah is at first moved to tears by such an exhibition of incorrigible hardness under Jehovah's chastisements (*v.* 4); but at length sorrow gives place to indignation, and in his inner ear there sounds like a knell the awful sentence of rejection, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts" (*v.* 14). This is Isaiah's last word to his people. How can we account for this sudden and startling plunge from hope to despair? How was it that the man who had so calmly faced the supreme danger of the state with a faith that nothing could shake broke down

[1] Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 356.

utterly in the hour of his vindication and triumph? The answer is not doubtful: Isaiah was disappointed in the spiritual fruit of the crisis. His hopes had been set on something far greater than the raising of a siege and the annihilation of an army. He had expected that the arm of the Lord would be recognised in this deliverance, and that the chastened spirit which had been evoked by those days of anxiety and fear would ripen into a genuine national conversion. He had looked, in short, for the emergence at last of the Remnant of penitent and believing Israelites who after the great catastrophe would form the nucleus of the future kingdom of God. And now all these high hopes have been dissipated by the unseasonable levity of the populace. The temper of Jerusalem—the "jubilant town" (xxii. 2, xxxii. 13, cf. v. 14)—is unchanged. Her incurable frivolity fills the prophet with despair, and calls up before his eyes the vision of a more terrible visitation in the future.

The end of Isaiah's life is veiled in obscurity. A Jewish tradition current in the second century after Christ says that he outlived Hezekiah and perished in the reaction under Manasseh; but this, although not inherently incredible, is destitute of historical value. An attractive suggestion of Duhm assigns the most brilliant pictures of the Messianic age (ii. 1—4, xi. 1—8, xxxii. 1—6) to his latest years, when the aged prophet, after a life spent in labour and conflict, turned with rapture to that ideal future which in spite of delays and disappointments must surely be realised. It is no doubt a pleasing fancy to think that Isaiah might have sung like Dante;

> Per correr miglior acqua alza le vele
> Omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
> Che lascia dietro a sè mar sì crudele
>
> (*Purgatorio*, i. 1—3);

but it is nothing more. For us Isaiah's life-work really ends with the events of 701. How long he survived the deliverance, how his last years were occupied, in what spirit he faced the problems of a new century, we cannot tell. It was enough for one man to have guided the destinies of his country through its

first eventful conflict with the world-power which in its own ruthless fashion was preparing the way for a new civilisation; to have enunciated the principles of the moral government of the universe which made monotheism a practical power in history; to have enriched eschatology with the figure of the ideal King; to have formed within the Jewish state a prophetic party in which the religion of the spirit eventually detached itself from its national embodiment; and to have left behind him an illustrious example of that faith to which the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

A solution of the more difficult problems of Isaiah's later activity has been sought by several good critics[1] in the theory of a second siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib about the year 690. Evidence of this expedition is supposed to be found in a recently discovered (1904) tablet of Sennacherib describing an expedition against *Arabia* (also alluded to in inscriptions of Esar-haddon and Asshurbanipal), combined with the singular fact that Herodotus, in his account of the mysterious visitation of field mice which caused the annihilation of an Assyrian army on the Egyptian frontier (II. 141), speaks of Sennacherib as king of the *Arabians and* Assyrians. Hence it is concluded that this legend refers to an incident subsequent to the conquest of Arabia (i.e. at the earliest in 690); and if, as has generally been supposed, the basis of the story is the pestilence recorded in Isa. xxxvii. 36, it would seem to follow that at least the second of the two narratives in Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii. must be detached from the campaign of 701 and assigned to a considerably later period. It is obvious that this evidence is quite insufficient of itself to support the hypothesis of a second invasion of *Palestine*; and the theory would scarcely call for criticism but for the light it is believed to throw on the development of Isaiah's political and eschatological conceptions. Its consequences in this direction are very ably and fully worked out by Staerk in his suggestive monograph on *Das assyrische Weltreich im Urteil der Propheten* (pp. 81 ff.); and briefly stated they amount to this: that Isaiah's predictions of a judgement on Jerusalem refer to the siege of 701, which ended in a partial triumph

[1] Most recently by Professor Rogers in the Wellhausen *Festschrift* (1914), pp. 317 ff.

for Sennacherib; that all the anti-Assyrian prophecies belong to a time after 701, and are based on observation of the peculiar barbarity and arrogance of Sennacherib's later conquests; and that the promises of deliverance relate to the second siege, which ended in a great disaster to the Assyrians. It will be found, however, that the simplification is more apparent than real. (1) As regards the historical section (xxxvi., xxxvii.) it is admitted that the first of the two narratives is of much greater historical value than the second. But since the first contains (like the other) only promises of deliverance, it becomes necessary to assume that the writer has confused the two events by attributing to Isaiah an outlook during the first siege which he held only in the second. Now it is altogether unreasonable to sacrifice the credibility of the earlier and better informed document to one that is confessedly inferior. Even if we were led to date the pestilence of xxxvii. 36 later than 701, it would be more plausible to suggest that the late writer of that account had mistakenly identified it with the less dramatic deliverance of 701. There is no need, however, to doubt the impression that we have here two parallel versions of the same event. (2) As regards the change in Isaiah's attitude we may note (*a*) that the Assyrian conquests enumerated in x. 9 ff. are spoken of as quite recent events, and the latest of them took place in 717. (*b*) The imaginary route of the Assyrians against Jerusalem in x. 28 ff. is from the direction of Samaria, whereas the invasion of 690 is assumed to have been from the direction of Arabia. It would seem therefore that at least *one* anti-Assyrian prophecy dates from before 701; and if one, why not all? (*c*) It is not possible to separate the predictions of doom from the promises of salvation in the way postulated by Staerk. In xxix. 1—8 and xxxi. 4—9 they are blended in a psychological unity which appears to us to defy literary analysis. (*d*) If it be thought that the interval between 705 and 701 is too short to allow of such a rapid development as Isaiah's mind is supposed to have undergone, the easiest solution would be to carry back the denunciations of the Egyptian alliance to *c.* 714 (see p. xxxv). But (*e*) lastly the change in Isaiah's attitude is neither so sudden nor so radical as Staerk imagines. It is not the case that he was ever pro-Assyrian in the sense that he recognised the moral right of Assyria as the great State to absorb the decadent nationalities of Western Asia. Assyria was the instrument in Jehovah's hands to execute His judgement on the peoples, but Isaiah never fancied that its

policy coincided with the moral purpose of the Almighty. He could not at any time have identified the Assyrian empire with the kingdom of God, but must always have looked beyond the judgement to the realisation of Jehovah's final purpose with the world. The only change we observe is a growing conviction that the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, which is imminent, will involve the destruction of the world-power; and such a change is easily conceivable alongside of the conviction that Judah has not yet experienced the full penalty of her apostasy and sin.

III.

Isaiah's Prophetic Conceptions.

The ruling ideas of Isaiah's ministry are not materially different from those of the other great prophets of the same period, Amos, Hosea, and Micah. All these writers are animated by the same fundamental convictions with regard to the nature and character of Jehovah the God of Israel, His controversy with His people, the necessity of a national judgement to be inflicted through the agency of Assyria, and the final establishment of Jehovah's kingdom. But to this common body of prophetic doctrine each prophet contributes something that is distinctive, according as the bent of his genius or his peculiar experience led him to develop certain aspects of truth specially revealed to him. In the case of Isaiah we shall see that from the beginning his message contained some elements not to be found in the writings of his contemporaries; while other distinctive conceptions emerge in the course of his ministry. Being pre-eminently a man of action and a statesman, his firm grasp of political facts imparts a special direction to his thoughts of the divine kingdom; and the necessity of presenting a definite religious policy to the rulers of the state gives a precision and fulness to his forecasts of the future in which he is hardly equalled by any other prophet. At the same time there is an organic unity in his teaching, all his leading ideas being implicitly contained in a few simple but comprehensive principles

disclosed to him in his inaugural vision. They may be arranged under three heads: first, those more immediately connected with the prophet's conception of God; second, his view of Israel; and third, his eschatological conceptions.

1. Jehovah and His Work.

Isaiah is a monotheist in the strictest sense of the term. There is no sentence in his writings which suggests that he attributed any sort of real existence to the false gods of the heathen; and if he never reasons on the subject of the divine unity, it is because the fact was too fundamental in his mind to admit of demonstration. He speaks of idols as "the work of men's hands" (ii. 8, 20, xvii. 8, xxxi. 7): his favourite designation for them is *'ĕlîlîm* ("not-gods" or "nonentities"), a word which he himself may have coined to express his sense of their unreality. Nor are the prophet's allusions to the primitive or imported nature-worship which existed in the land (i. 29, 30, xvii. 10, 11) less decisive as to his attitude towards the polytheistic tendencies of his countrymen. For him, in short, there was but one divine Being; and all his conceptions of Godhead are summed up in the revelation which made him a prophet, the vision of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel (ch. vi.).

It has been already remarked (p. xxvi) that the aspect of the divine nature chiefly expressed by this vision is that of overwhelming and awe-inspiring majesty. The effect produced on the mind by Isaiah's magnificent description is far more impressive and convincing on this point than any analysis of the contents of the vision can be. But if we must analyse, we cannot fail to observe how every touch in the picture emphasises the general conception of Jehovah as a transcendently glorious Being, in whose awful presence no unconsecrated mortal can stand. The throne "high and lofty" on which He sits indicates that He is a King, and not the King of Israel alone, but the absolute, universal Sovereign (*ădôn*) whose glory is the fulness of the whole earth. The fiery creatures, the Seraphs, who are the

ministers of His court, and who reflect something of His ineffable glory, nevertheless veil themselves before Him in the consciousness of their imperfection, while the hymn of praise that continually ascends from their lips expresses their sense of His adorable and incomparable majesty. Further, the fear of death which overtakes the prophet as he gazes unbidden on this solemn mystery, as well as the symbol of his expiation, which is by contact with the fire in which Jehovah dwells, and also the sternness of the divine message to Israel, all contribute to the impression which this scene conveys of Jehovah's unapproachable majesty.

The chant of the seraphs contains two words which may be said to sum up the import of the vision in so far as it is a revelation of God. Of these the first is the word *holy*, expressing what Jehovah is in Himself; while the second—*glory*—appears to denote an aspect of His Godhead which is reflected in the world.

In order to understand the significance of the term "holiness" (*ḳôdesh*) in Isaiah's conception of God, we have to start from a much lower level of religious thinking than that which is represented by his teaching. The word is not confined to the religion of Israel, but was used throughout Semitic antiquity as the most comprehensive predicate of deity, although the idea primarily expressed by it is somewhat uncertain. If, as many writers believe, it comes from a root signifying "separation" or "distance" it would embody the notion of the contrast between the divine and the human which was perhaps characteristic of the conception of God common to the Semitic peoples. It is certain at all events that "holiness" does not express any special attribute of the divine nature but rather the general notion of godhead, as distinguished from every other form of existence. Such a phrase, for example, as "the holy gods," which occurs in the inscription of Eshmunazar king of Sidon, as well as in Dan. iv. 8, 9, 18, v. 11, is a mere redundancy of speech, gratifying the reverential feeling of the speakers, but conveying no information as to the character of the gods. Least of all did the term connote ethical

purity ; for the deities to whom it was applied by the heathen Semites were not only immoral from our point of view, but were not even regarded as moral beings by their own worshippers[1].

Now the writings of the Hebrew prophets, and of Isaiah in particular, mark an important stage in the development of this notion of holiness. At first sight it might seem inexplicable that a purely formal idea, expressing no positive conception beyond that of awe-inspiring power and majesty, should become a central doctrine of the prophetic theology. But in truth it is the very vagueness and comprehensiveness of the term which explains the profound significance attaching to it in the mind of Isaiah. By taking this word, which by universal consent embraced all that was distinctive of deity, *and restricting it to Jehovah*, he expressed the fundamental truth that in the God of Israel and in Him alone are concentrated all the attributes of true divinity[2]. Holiness thus ceases to be an abstract quality shared by a number of divine beings ; it comes to denote the fulness of what Jehovah is as He is known from His revelation of Himself to the consciousness of the prophet. It signalises the most notable fact in the religious history of Israel, the formation of an idea of God which at once placed an impassable gulf between Jehovah and all other beings who claimed the title of divine ; and it is this positive idea of God, expressed in the doctrine of Jehovah's unique holiness, that is the mainstay of Isaiah's theology.

From this point of view it is immaterial to determine how much or how little of permanent religious truth may have been

[1] With the secondary applications of the word to places, persons and things we are not here concerned ; but the fact that the Hierodouloi, or sacred prostitutes, of the Canaanite religion were known as "holy women" furnishes decisive evidence of the complete divorce in ancient times of the two ideas of holiness and morality.

[2] No attempt is here made to discriminate between what is peculiar to Isaiah and what is common to him and other prophets. It is not implied that he was the only, or the first, writer who made this application of the word "holy."

contained in the primitive notion of holiness, which prevailed in the Semitic world. It is probable that the word universally conveyed impressions of the awful might of the Godhead such as are reflected in Isaiah's vision, just as the prophet's presentiment of death may be akin to the popular belief that the direct sight of God bodes destruction to mortals (Jud. xiii. 22, &c.). This at any rate is an element in Isaiah's idea of God and is therefore included under the word "holiness." But a term which embraces every distinctive attribute of deity must necessarily expand and deepen with every advance in the true knowledge of God. Hence we might expect that under the influence of Revelation the idea would be filled with ethical contents, and would denote the moral perfectness which belongs to the character of Jehovah. That this is included in Isaiah's use of the word appears clearly from the sense of sin which the vision of God awakened within him. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." This consciousness of moral defect cleaving to him answers to the conception of Jehovah as a Being of spotless purity, separated not only from nature, but from all that is imperfect and sinful One who is "of too pure eyes to behold evil" (Hab. i. 13). Thus in Isaiah's hands the word "holy" becomes a complete expression for the doctrine of God which is maintained by the prophets. It denotes first, the natural attributes of power and majesty which are inseparable from the thought of Deity; second, the ethical character and perfection of the God of Revelation; while finally by being restricted in its application to Jehovah it asserts His exclusive right to the adoration and homage not merely of His own people but of all His rational creatures.

The second word, "glory" (*kabôd*), is used in the Old Testament in a variety of senses. It is certainly less comprehensive than "holy," and is perhaps hardly to be considered a strictly theological term. Nevertheless its use in the Trisagion suggests a striking aspect of Isaiah's conception of the relation of God to the universe. In nearly all cases "glory" means the external manifestation of power or greatness, whether of a

king (Isa. viii. 7 ; Ps. xxiv. 7 ff.) or a nation (Isa. xvii. 3, 4 ; Mic. i. 15) or an individual (Gen. xxxi. 1 ; Job xxix. 20), or humanity as such (Ps. viii. 5). The glory of God is spoken of chiefly in two senses ; first, of the honour and praise due to Him from men (or angels) (Mal. i. 6) ; and second, of the dazzling brightness in which He arrays Himself when He supernaturally manifests His presence on earth (Ez. iii. 23, &c. ; Ex. xvi. 10, &c.). Neither of these meanings, however, quite suits the use of the term in the second line of the Seraphs' hymn, which literally translated reads "the filling of the whole earth is His glory." Obviously "glory" is here something objective, as distinct from the glory ascribed to God in the praises of His creatures ; while it is at the same time something "far more deeply interfused" with nature than the supernatural phenomena of the cloud of fire and light. The general idea must be that all which the world contains, all that is sublime and powerful in nature, is the outward expression and symbol of the majesty which belongs to Him as the God of all the earth.

This leads us to consider an important development of the doctrine of the divine sovereignty which is conspicuous in the writings of Isaiah ; namely, the idea of a "work" or "plan" which is the revelation of Jehovah in history. In the vision the Great King is represented as deliberating with Himself on the interests of His Kingdom, and calling for a messenger to represent Him on earth. Isaiah's mind was thus directly led to the thought of a divine purpose which is being progressively realised in the providential government of the world. The thought was evidently one that laid a deep hold upon him (see ch. v. 12, x. 12, 23, xiv. 24, 26 f., [xxii. 11], xxviii. 21 f.). By the "work" of Jehovah he means chiefly, indeed, (though, as we shall see, not exclusively), the great consummation of history towards which events were rapidly hastening. It is a "final and decisive work" which Jehovah is about to execute (x. 23, xxviii. 22). Its goal is the manifestation of His own Godhead, and the establishment of His Kingdom of righteousness on the earth. But this is not all that Isaiah means by the "work" of

God. Not only in the supreme crisis of history but in the stirring political changes of his time the prophet discerns the operation of Jehovah's hands. Not to perceive this divine working is one of the great faults with which he charges the irreligious leaders of his people (v. 12, xxii. 11). Just as Jehovah's glory fills the whole earth, though the eyes of men are blind to it, so His activity pervades all human history, although from the lips of unbelievers the prophet hears the shallow scoff: "let Him hasten His work that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh that we may know it" (v. 19). It is this conception of a continuous work of Jehovah in His providence that enables Isaiah to bring the idea of God into such close contact with the events of his time, and makes the doctrine of the universal divine Sovereignty so living and practical a principle of his ministry. History is to him a drama rapidly approaching its *denouement*, and in the great convulsions which were shaking the foundations of the political world he hears the footsteps of the Almighty marching onwards to a day of crisis and final hope for humanity. And thus Jehovah "reigns supreme alike in the realm of nature, and the sphere of human history; and the crash of kingdoms, the total dissolution of the old order of the Hebrew world, which accompanied the advance of Assyria, is to the prophet nothing else than the crowning proof of Jehovah's absolute dominion, asserting itself in the abasement of all that disputes His supremacy[1]."

Such appear to be the leading elements in Isaiah's conception of God. Special applications of them will meet us when we come to consider the relations between Jehovah and Israel. Other attributes than those mentioned are of course frequently referred to: for example, wisdom (xxviii. 29, xxxi. 2), jealousy or zeal (ix. 7), anger and the like. Judicial righteousness is directly connected with the idea of holiness in the remarkable sentence: "the holy God shall sanctify Himself (i.e. shew Himself holy) in righteousness" (v. 16). But all such attributes

[1] Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, p. 226.

are included in the personal, anthropomorphic idea of God which Isaiah shares with all the Old Testament writers. In spite of the infinite distance between God and man, expressed by the term holiness, it still remains true that the divine Being cannot be rightly conceived, except as endowed with the attributes and emotions of moral personality. It is to be remarked, however, as characteristic of Isaiah that the sterner aspects of the divine character are those almost exclusively insisted upon. He never speaks of "love" or "kindness" as attributes of Jehovah. There is indeed a purpose of grace underlying all His dealings with men, and the thought is expressed (though in a passage of doubtful genuineness) that the Lord "waits" till He can have compassion on His people (xxx. 18). But Jehovah's message through Isaiah contains no note of yearning affection like that which melted the tender heart of Hosea. We search his writings in vain for such pathetic images as the husband seeking with pure and unselfish love to reclaim the unfaithful wife from a life of shame and misery, or the father teaching his child to walk, holding it by its arms. To the strong nature of Isaiah, God reveals Himself as the absolute Sovereign, of an infinite majesty ; and when He speaks through him to men it is always in accents of regal authority.

2. Jehovah and Israel.

Like all the prophets, Isaiah bases his message to his countrymen on the conception of a unique relation between Jehovah and the nation of Israel. In virtue of this relation Jehovah is Israel's God, and Israel is Jehovah's people. These propositions express the two sides of what may be called the religious consciousness of the nation ; and the prophets, although they may have given them an interpretation not understood by the bulk of their contemporaries, nevertheless assert the principle that Israel stands in a peculiar relation to Jehovah, and that in a special sense Jehovah is the God of Israel. And here we come upon a fact of primary importance in the prophetic view of

religion, although it is one which it is difficult to state briefly in its full significance without one-sided exaggeration. Religion, as taught by the prophets, is not a matter between God and the individual soul, but between God and the nation. Israel is invariably conceived by them as a national unity, and frequently figured as a moral person, and it is this unity, embodied in the organisation of the state, which is the religious subject. Individual Israelites are, as a matter of course, bound to acknowledge and honour Jehovah in their conduct; but in all directly religious acts they appear as members of the nation; and all their relationships to God are determined by the fact that in their several spheres of life they belong to the community which is the immediate object of Jehovah's regard. This is a truth which has to be constantly borne in mind in reading the prophets; the love or faith or obedience they require are faith and love and obedience on the part of the whole people in its corporate capacity, and the sins they denounce, though committed by individuals, are sins in which, in virtue of the principle of solidarity, the whole nation is implicated.

Isaiah's sense of this peculiar relation of Jehovah to Israel is inseparably bound up with his general conceptions of the divine nature. The thought of God as the universal Sovereign is specialised in the idea of His kingship over Israel, an idea whose influence makes itself felt in the whole of the prophet's activity. Israel is the immediate sphere of Jehovah's royal functions, and it is in His name that Isaiah claims an authoritative voice in the direction of the affairs of the state. He speaks to his countrymen as one who has "seen the King" and has been commissioned to declare His will as the supreme law of the nation. Thus through the medium of the prophetic word the abstract doctrine of the divine sovereignty is translated into living and personal relations between Jehovah the King and Israel His kingdom. Similarly the supreme quality of holiness, or essential divinity, becomes a practical factor in religion through being brought to bear on Jehovah's relation to His people. He is, to use a favourite title of Isaiah's, the Holy

One of Israel[1]," i.e. the Holy Being who is the God of Israel. Here again Israel is conceived as the community within which Jehovah reveals Himself as He truly is, and by which His character as the Holy One is to be recognised, and exhibited to the world. The whole of Isaiah's conception of national religion is summed up in the phrase to "sanctify the Lord of Hosts" (viii. 13, xxix. 23); that is, to acknowledge and worship His Godhead, and to cherish towards Him the sentiment of fear and reverence which was impressed on the prophet's own mind by the revelation of His holiness.

The prophet's judgement on the actual state of the nation is but the application of these principles to the religious and social conditions of his time. The conviction of an irreconcilable breach between Jehovah and His people springs from his first personal contact with the awful holiness of Israel's God. The immediate effect of the vision was to produce a sense, not merely of his own uncleanness, but of the uncleanness of the whole life of the nation. He then realised what it was to "dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (vi. 5); and when he returned to his place among men, with a conscience purified and quickened by what he had experienced, he had to bear witness of his fellow-countrymen that "their tongue and their doings were against Jehovah to provoke the eyes of His glory" (iii. 8). His own lips had been purged by contact with the fire which is the emblem of the divine holiness; but at the same time he learned that the only fire which could cleanse the unholy nation was the fire of judgement, which was to consume the base and worthless elements of the state till only the indestructible remnant, the holy seed, remained (vi. 13; cf. iv. 4 f.).

Thus the sense of Jehovah's holiness has its counterpart in the

[1] The phrase is almost limited to the book of Isaiah, forming one of the linguistic links between the two great divisions of the book. Elsewhere it occurs only in Ps. lxxi. 22, lxxviii. 41, lxxxix. 18; Jer. l. 29, li. 5 (the last two being secondary passages); and, in a somewhat different form, in Ezek. xxxix. 7. There is little doubt, therefore, that it was first introduced by Isaiah.

conviction of Israel's actual uncleanness, and it is important to observe how every article in Isaiah's indictment of the nation runs back to this fundamental antithesis. The prevalent idolatry was a direct and open denial of His Godhead, a degrading of Him to the level of the "nonentities" of the heathen Pantheon. Religion, as conceived and practised by the people, was not the heart-felt recognition of His holy character: the homage rendered to Him was purely formal, a "human tradition learned by rote" (xxix. 13), a profuse and elaborate sacrificial ritual i. 10–17). The grinding tyranny of the upper classes, joined as it was with corrupt administration of justice, was an abuse of the sacred trust delegated by the Holy King to the "elders and princes of His people" (iii. 13–15). Israel, the vineyard of Jehovah, is ravaged by those whom He had appointed to be its keepers, and when He "looked for judgement, behold bloodshed; and for righteousness, behold a cry" (v. 7). The religious indifference, the scepticism, the luxury, the dissipation, of the statesmen and nobles, all proceed from the same root of insensibility to the claims of Jehovah's holiness, or the reality of His divinity; and their pride in horses and chariots, in fortifications and armies, in skilled diplomacy and strong coalitions reveals their utter unbelief in the spiritual Power which rules the universe. In all these features of society the prophet reads the symptoms of a deep-seated national ungodliness and apostasy, of a people in veiled rebellion against its true Sovereign. "They have forsaken Jehovah, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they have apostatised and gone backward" (i. 4). They are children in ungrateful and unnatural revolt against their Father (i. 2, xxx. 9). The alienation between Israel and its God is complete; Israel has forsaken Jehovah, and Jehovah has rejected His people (ii. 6).

There is one feature of Isaiah's ministry that reveals a darker view of Israel's spiritual condition than was expressed by any of his predecessors. He entered on his work in the consciousness that the effect of his mission would be to seal the doom of his people (vi. 9 ff.). To many modern writers such a perception

has seemed inconceivable in the case of a youthful prophet on the threshold of his career ; and it has been very generally held that this part of the vision is projected into the past from the disappointing experience of failure which came to the prophet some years later. But there is no justification for thus impugning the veracity of Isaiah's narrative. There is nothing incredible in the thought that in that supreme moment of inspiration the conviction was flashed into his mind that a revelation of Jehovah's holiness would be intolerable to the age in which he lived, so that the men he knew would be repelled and driven into deeper guilt and sin by every fresh disclosure of the mind and will of God. He saw, what perhaps no earlier teacher of Israel had seen, that the very clearness and fulness of the knowledge of God becomes a means of condemnation to men who have sunk so far that they love the darkness rather than the light. Thus while Amos speaks of a "famine of the word of the Lord" as the greatest calamity that could befal Israel, Isaiah grasps the deeper, though seemingly paradoxical truth, that a far more dangerous and testing experience lies in the exceeding abundance of the word of Jehovah, which is about to be vouchsafed to Israel[1].

The profound truth of this intuition was repeatedly verified in Isaiah's prophetic experience, and more than once he falls back on it, tracing the impenetrable hardness of the people to a judicial visitation of Jehovah. He did so when he retired defeated from his contest with Ahaz and the nation in the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war, which was probably the occasion of the first publication of the vision. In still stronger language he characterises the storm of opposition which was roused against him by his denunciation of the Egyptian alliance in the reign of Sennacherib. "They say to the prophets...get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us*" (xxx. 11) ; and Isaiah ascribes their infatuation to the fact that "Jehovah has poured

[1] Duhm.

out on them a spirit of deep sleep, and closed their eyes and muffled their heads" (xxix. 10).

Isaiah has been called the "prophet of Faith"; and we can now understand in what sense he used that great word of religion. The idea that faith must be the ruling principle of political action for Israel, and is the indispensable condition of national salvation, is one to which he always attached supreme importance. There are three memorable sayings of his in which this truth is embodied. These are: "if ye will not believe, ye shall not be established" (vii. 9); "he that believeth shall not make haste" (xxviii. 16,—see note on the verse); "in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (xxx. 15). These utterances seem to carry us into the very heart of Isaiah's teaching, for they express that which was deepest in his own spiritual life. To him revelation was an articulate personal word from the living God, the Holy One whom he had seen in vision; and he received it with the unhesitating confidence due to a Being of infinite wisdom and power, declaring His purpose in faithfulness and truth. Isaiah believed and therefore he spoke. And knowing thus by experience what it was to live by faith, he dared to ask of statesmen groping their way blindly in a difficult and intricate situation, not seeing for themselves the work of Jehovah nor the operation of His hands, that they too should exercise the same implicit trust in the God whose sovereign will was made known to them in the prophetic word. There is no manifestation of loyalty to the Divine King on which the prophet lays greater stress than this. The capacity for faith in this sense becomes the measure and test of the nation's religious state; its refusal to believe is the final evidence that it is beyond the possibility of political salvation. Even when the fate of the people as a whole is sealed by the unbelief of its rulers, faith remains as the principle of individual religion for those who separate themselves from the sin of their generation. The spiritual community which Isaiah saw forming itself within the physical Israel was constituted by faith in his prophetic message;

and when he says of himself that he will "wait for Jehovah" (viii. 17), he expresses at the same time the attitude of those who were his disciples. When in a later prophecy (xxviii. 16) he speaks of the foundation of God's kingdom as already laid in Zion and promises safety to "him that believeth," he clearly means that the impending judgement has no terrors for him who takes his stand on the sure word of Revelation.

3. Eschatological Ideas.

The belief in an impending cataclysmic dissolution of the existing order of the world appears to be of the essence of Hebrew prophecy. This expectation is partly the result of the prophets' sense of contradiction between the imperfections and moral confusions of the present and the ideal state of things which faith in God's righteous government of the universe demanded. It was undoubtedly strengthened by their presentiment of the approaching conflict with the world-power, in which their nation must perish. But in addition to this there is in the prophetic delineations of the future a traditional element, derived from an older phase of religious reflexion, which was taken up by the prophets and fashioned into a vehicle for their ethical conception of God's final purpose with the world. The general representation which meets us in the prophecy of the eighth century is that of a sudden and violent upheaval of the physical and social conditions of human life, to be followed by a new order of things in which the divine rule on earth is realised and all nature becomes subservient to the needs of a renewed humanity. The picture contains features which to our minds are supernatural; but on the whole it may be said that nature is not so much superseded as idealised, through its evils being eliminated and its beneficent powers indefinitely enhanced. And all this not as the remote goal of history, or the result of a progressive amelioration of earthly conditions, but as the immediate sequel to the political catastrophe which the prophets saw to be imminent.

The development of Isaiah's complex eschatology turns on four main ideas which from time to time emerge in the foreground of his teaching: viz. (1) the Day of the Lord, (2) the Remnant, (3) the Messianic King, and (4) the Inviolability of Zion. The attempt to simplify Isaiah's outlook on the future by making any one, or any pair, of these a central principle has cut deep into the criticism of the book, and has led to the denial of the genuineness of many of the discourses[1]. We hold that there is no incompatibility between them, although varying circumstances lend prominence now to one and now to another in the active ministry of Isaiah.

(1) *The Day of the Lord.*— Amongst the earliest of Isaiah's public discourses is the powerful description in ch. ii. 12—21 of a "day" of universal overthrow, in which "all that is high and lofty" in nature or human civilisation will be laid low, when men will fling their idols to the moles and rats and hide themselves from the "glory of Jehovah's majesty when he rises up to cause the earth to tremble." This Day of Jehovah, as we learn from Amos v. 18 ff., was a part of the traditional eschatology which was adopted by that prophet and, in the transformed sense which he gave to it (p. 22), became a standing feature of the prophetic vision of the future. Yet it is not difficult to discover vital points of contact between Isaiah's picture of it and his personal experience. The imagery is that of the earthquake, and in this we may trace Isaiah's recollection of the great earthquake which he witnessed in his youth (p. xxv). Further, the fundamental conception is that of the Theophany —a visible apparition of Jehovah, breaking through the material fabric of the universe, and revealing His immediate presence. This at once recalls the scenery of the inaugural vision (ch. vi.). The great Being whom Isaiah there saw *seated* on His Throne is now seen *rising up* (cf. iii. 13) in awful grandeur, to shake the

[1] A lucid and interesting account of these discussions may be found in an article by Prof. Kemper Fullerton in the *Harvard Theological Review* for October, 1913 (pp. 478 ff.) to which the following pages are partly indebted.

earth; the veiled "glory" which is the fulness of the whole earth (vi. 3) now breaks forth in dazzling and terrifying splendour. Thus the idea of the Day of the Lord, though borrowed from the popular religion and handed on from Amos to Isaiah, was re-born in the consciousness of our prophet and became an integral element of his eschatology.

Several questions are raised as to the place which this conception really holds in Isaiah's eschatology. Some maintain that the judgement to which he looked forward was simply the Assyrian invasion, and that the imagery of physical upheaval is only a figurative way of describing that political catastrophe. Others again think that the Day of the Lord belongs exclusively to the early ministry of Isaiah, having been replaced later by representations of a less apocalyptic and more realistic character, such as the Remnant and the Inviolability of Zion. But these theories have no foundation in Isaiah's thinking. It is true that the Day of Jehovah is never again described as an isolated supernatural event apart from its historical investiture, and that the expression does not recur except in the abbreviated and ambiguous phrase "in that day." It is true also that the Assyrians are conceived as Jehovah's agents to punish the sin and humble the pride of Israel, and that an overthrow of the Judean state is looked for at their hands. But that is not the complete manifestation of Jehovah's purpose: behind it lies in Isaiah's later vision the destruction of Assyria itself; and every anticipation of that crowning act of judgement shews that he regarded it as brought about by the personal and supernatural intervention of the Holy One of Israel. And when after the retreat of Sennacherib's army he still announces the doom of impenitent Jerusalem (xxii. 1—14), it is clear that he did not think of his expectation of judgement as exhausted by the Assyrian invasion. Hence the essential idea of the Day of Jehovah remained with Isaiah till the close of his career, and pervaded all his forecasts of the approaching climax of human history.

(2) *The Remnant.*—The doctrine of the Remnant first

appears with remarkable abruptness in the name of the son Shear-jashub who accompanied Isaiah in his memorable interview with Ahaz in 735. The truth embodied in that name—i.e. the conviction that a remnant, but only a remnant, of Israel would turn to God and be saved—must have come to Isaiah some years previously under circumstances which are not recorded: it is at least probable that it is foreshadowed in the inaugural vision (vi. 13). Now the very idea of a remnant implies a certain continuity between the present order of things and the perfect order of the future; and in this sense it was not new in Isaiah's hands. Originally, indeed, it may have denoted simply the chance survivors of the last judgement, whose fate had no positive value for the future, like the two legs and piece of an ear rescued from the jaws of the lion (Am. iii. 12). But this stage had been transcended long before Isaiah's time, as we see from the account of Elijah's vision at Horeb (1 Kings xix. 18). The remnant of 7000 who are to be spared in the convulsions of the northern kingdom consists of those who have been faithful to Jehovah in the past, and have not bowed the knee to Baal. The idea of the Remnant had thus acquired a positive eschatological content; and it is possible that it has this sense also in Amos v. 15[1]. We have to consider what significance it had to the mind of Isaiah.

And first as to the *extent* of the Remnant. As regards the northern kingdom, there is no reason to suppose that Isaiah ever looked for the salvation of more than a few isolated survivors (xvii. 5, 6): the state as such was irrevocably doomed. But as regards Judah it is probable that down to 735 the prophet had a hope that the entire kingdom might be saved if her rulers would adopt the religious policy which he inculcated in the name of Jehovah. The presence of Shear-jashub at his meeting with Ahaz would thus signify on the one hand that if the king had faith to act on Isaiah's counsel all Judah would form the Remnant and would pass unscathed through

[1] See Gressmann, *Ursprung der isr.-jüd. Eschatologie*, pp. 229 ff.

the impending world-crisis; but that in the contrary event only a remnant of Judah would inherit the promise of the Messianic age. Isaiah's hopes for the nation as a whole were shattered by the refusal of Ahaz; and henceforth the promise of salvation is restricted to a Remnant, which might be larger or smaller according to the number of individuals who should believe the prophet's message and wait with him for the manifestation of the kingdom of God.

The doctrine of the Remnant comes thus to have two aspects in the teaching of Isaiah. On the one hand it is a purely eschatological idea, as in x. 20—23, perhaps the only later passage (except xxviii. 5) where it is expressly mentioned in a presumably genuine Isaianic prophecy. There the Remnant is identified with the "escaped" of Jacob in the final visitation; and for all that appears the conversion there predicted might be one that is to take place after the judgement is past. But on the other hand we have already seen (p. xxxiii) how the idea became a "practical principle" of Isaiah's activity. Although there is but a solitary allusion to the fact that he gathered round him a band of "disciples" (viii. 16—18), it is a valid inference that in that relation he addressed himself to the task of "consolidating the Remnant," with the conscious purpose of forming an inner circle of religious fellowship which should be the nucleus of the future people of God. In this view the doctrine of the Remnant might be more fitly spoken of as the doctrine of the *kernel*; for it was the conviction that within the actual Israel of the present there is an indestructible germ of true godliness that gave to Isaiah the assurance that in spite of public failure his work had yet an abiding value for the perfect religion of the future.

(3) *The Messianic King.*—The word "Messiah" (anointed one) is never used in the Old Testament in the special sense to which it has been consecrated by Jewish and Christian usage. But it is the most appropriate term for that conception of an ideal King of the house of David, which first appears in prophecy in the writings of Isaiah, and which proved to be the

most perfect of all types of the Kingdom of God. The passages in the book of Isaiah where the figure of this ideal King appears are ch. ix. 2—7, xi. 1—9 and xxxii. 1—5. It is unfortunate that the dates of these prophecies cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. The prevalent view amongst earlier critics was that they stand in chronological order, the first belonging to the reign of Ahaz, the second to an early period of Hezekiah's reign, and the last to the time of Sennacherib's invasion. But this view rests on the assumption that they belong historically to the groups of discourses in which they occur, an assumption which is hardly justified by the literary analysis of the book. There are no sufficient reasons, however, to doubt that they are all genuine prophecies of Isaiah; and if the Messianic interpretation of the Immanuel oracle of vii. 14—17, advocated in the Note on pp. 61 ff., be correct, it would go far to fix the date of ix. 2—7; and also to explain the origin of this conception of the ideal King in Isaiah's mind. It is at least a remarkable coincidence that in both places the destiny of the nation is made to turn on the birth of a child, and there is a presumption that the two passages stand near to each other in time, and that the child Immanuel is identical with the Child upon the throne of ix. 6 f. If these presumptions be allowed it follows that the image of the ideal Ruler first dawned on Isaiah's mind in the dark days when he saw the ruin of his country accelerated by the weakness and unbelief of the reigning king. At that moment Ahaz must have appeared to the prophet the incarnation of all that a king of Israel should not be, and although Immanuel is not expressly connected with the house of David, the idea that he was to take the place of the incompetent monarch to whom the sign was given is nevertheless suggested by the circumstances of the prophecy.

It has been remarked that the three great portraits of the Messiah, taken in the order in which they stand, exhibit a progressive waning of the mysterious aspects of His character, until at last the ideal seems to fade into the light of common day. It is undoubtedly the fact that the attributes and

prerogatives of the King come to be presented in more sober and subdued colours and in less exalted language. In ix. 6, he is endowed with attributes bordering on the divine; his fourfold name expressing some extraordinary and mysterious relation to Jehovah. He is called "Wonderful Counsellor, Hero-God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace." In xi. 1 ff., he is described as the shoot from the stock of Jesse, and as one uniquely endowed with the spirit of Jehovah for the perfect discharge of his kingly functions. And in xxxii. 1 he appears simply as an ordinary good king, reigning in righteousness and associated with princes of a like spirit ruling in judgement.

The chief point here raised is the question of the superhuman nature and origin of the Messiah. The four names of ix. 6, taken in connexion with the circumstances of his birth as announced in vii. 14 ff., certainly suggest that he is in some sense a divine, or semi-divine being. To take the names as *merely* honorific titles, or to explain them as descriptive not of the person of the Davidic king but of the divine qualities to be displayed in his government, are at best somewhat unsatisfying exegetical expedients. This is not to say that the Messiah is God, or even a God-man in the Christian sense;—such a conception would have been impossible in the time of Isaiah—but neither is he an ordinary mortal distinguished from other men only by the office which he holds. If the figure of the Messiah belonged originally to the pre-prophetic eschatology (see pp. 67 f., below), its supernatural elements may have their roots in primitive mythological notions of a divine kingship, which were not completely assimilated to the monotheistic faith of the Old Testament. It is possible that they signified nothing more to Isaiah's mind than that the Messiah was God's gift to the nation in the crisis of its destiny, and the pledge that the whole power of God would be put forth for the establishment of His kingdom ("The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this": ix. 7). Hence all that is of religious value in them is retained in the second of the three passages (xi. 1 ff.), where the kingly perfection of the Messiah is ascribed, in accordance with the

common teaching of the Old Testament, to the indwelling of the Spirit of Jehovah, which imparts to him the insight and energy and piety necessary for the discharge of his high functions. It is true that in xxxii. 1 the person of the king is not invested with the halo of divine attributes spoken of in ix. and xi.; but it does not follow either that Isaiah had lowered his ideal of Messianic kingship, or that he had abandoned it altogether. When he speaks of a king "reigning in righteousness" he includes what is essential in the conception of the Messiah; for the perfect discharge of the ethical functions of royalty is a task of such transcendent importance as to require the unique endowment of divine virtues which is the distinctive feature in the more ideal portraits of the Messiah.

(4) *The Inviolability of Zion.* The two ideas that Zion is the present seat of Jehovah's sovereignty and that it is to be the centre of the future kingdom of God appear in a large number of prophecies of Isaiah (i. 26 f., ii. 2—4, [iv. 2—6], viii. 18, x. 32 f., xiv. 32, xviii. 7, xxviii. 16, xxix. 1, xxx. 19, 29, [xxxiii. 5, 14, 20 f.], xxxvii. 32). In these there is nothing that is peculiar to Isaiah and little that requires explanation. It was in the Temple that he first saw the glory of Jehovah, and the thought that He dwelt there seems to have been always present to his mind. And the further thought that Zion would occupy the same central position in the ideal age as in the present is a natural and inevitable consequence of the general principle that the future dispensation is always represented under forms derived from the present.

But there is a particular application of these truths which is not only distinctive of Isaiah, but apparently limited to the later period of his ministry. It is that Zion as Jehovah's sanctuary is inviolable, that it shall be spared in the impending crisis of judgement, and form the refuge for those who are saved from the wreck of the nation, so that its sanctity becomes, along with the permanence of the Davidic kingdom, a pledge of the indestructibility of the true Israel. This concrete form of the principle does not appear to have been held by the prophet at the outset of his public life, for in ch. v. 14, 17,

iii. 26, and xxxii. 9—14 the destruction of Jerusalem is distinctly contemplated. Nor is it clear that it was enunciated even in the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitish war, although the allusion to the waters of Shiloah as an emblem of Jehovah's invisible sovereignty and the emphasis laid on Jehovah's dwelling in Zion (viii. 6, 18) may perhaps point in this direction. The first unambiguous expression of it is probably to be found in xiv. 32, where we read that "Jehovah hath founded Zion and there the poor of His people find refuge." And here the difficulties of the conception begin to appear. There are two questions: first, whether the sanctity of Zion, the Temple mount, guarantees the invulnerability of the whole city of Jerusalem; and second, how far the representation is literal, and how far merely figurative and symbolic of spiritual realities. Keeping these distinctions in view, we may briefly compare Isaiah's various utterances bearing on this subject.

The promise in xiv. 32 (written probably in 720) assigns the ground on which Isaiah counsels a rejection of the proposal to join the Philistine coalition against Assyria. Judah's safety lies in the protection of Jehovah, of which the pledge is the unassailability of His chosen sanctuary of Zion where the afflicted of His people—the Remnant that shall turn—will find a secure refuge. Here it would seem that the empirical mount Zion is intended; but whether the inviolable area includes the walls of Jerusalem appears uncertain.—The next passage, xxviii. 16 ff. (from the time of the negotiations with Egypt), is peculiarly instructive. Jehovah has laid in Zion a foundation stone bearing the inscription "He that believeth shall not be ashamed." In the coming deluge of invasion every false refuge of the conspirators will be swept away (cf. viii. 8), and Zion alone will be safe. Here the ideal and the material lie very close together. The "stone" is obviously a symbol for the Remnant—the foundation already laid of a spiritual community to be built by God after the judgement. But is mount Zion also symbolical, or is it conceived literally as the local habitation and shelter of the faithful Israelites who form the nucleus of the new people

of God? It is difficult to decide; but if the latter view were right, it seems clear that a distinction must be drawn between Zion and Jerusalem. For the refuge of the political partisans whom Isaiah is opposing is naturally behind the walls of the capital: and if the flood is to overtake them there, he must still have held to the expectation that the Assyrians would capture Jerusalem. On the whole, the ideal or symbolical interpretation appears more satisfying.—In x. 5 ff. the idea first appears in connexion with the humiliation of Assyria. But in this group of oracles two points of view seem to be represented. In v. 12 the destruction of Assyria is spoken of as *following* the chastisement of Jerusalem; whereas in *vv.* 28—34, it is while the Assyrian still stands over against the walls that Jehovah will strike him down (*vv.* 32 ff.). Here, therefore, the conception is no longer either symbolical or locally restricted, but amounts to a belief in the invincibility of the city. Which of these views is implied in the other purely anti-Assyrian prophecies it is impossible to say, all that is there predicted being the annihilation of the Assyrians on the soil of Palestine (xiv. 24—27, xvii. 12—14, xviii.). There remain two passages (xxix. 1—8, xxxi. 4—9) where disaster to Jerusalem is so intimately blended with the hope of her deliverance that it is extremely difficult to disentangle them. In the former especially, Jerusalem's peril is described in terms which suggest (as in v. 14) that she will be brought down to the underworld and her deliverance will be like a resurrection from the dead. It is impossible to extract a definite historical perspective from this utterance, or from the equally obscure imagery of xxxi. 4 ff. While it is certain that salvation is the last word of the prophet's message in these two oracles, it is not clear whether he contemplates a discomfiture of the Assyrian attack on Jerusalem or not.—In the less idealised predictions uttered during the actual siege of Jerusalem (xxxvi., xxxvii.) there is indeed no ambiguity: Isaiah foretold the deliverance of the city and the safety of its entire population in that particular emergency. And if the idea we are tracing disappears in the gloomy oracle

of xxii. 1—14, the fact is not surprising. At that moment Isaiah's whole forecast of the future lay shattered at his feet (p. xliv); and it may well be that the doctrine of Zion's inviolability had lost all hold on his mind. But looking back on what has been said, we cannot resist the impression that the prophet's view may have varied within certain limits from time to time, being now more ideal and now more empirical; so that the whole conception may not have been to his mind the hard and fast dogma which it has become in the hands of some of his commentators.

IV.

The Character and Genius of Isaiah.

The possibilities of the prophetic office are nowhere more splendidly illustrated than in the career of Isaiah. Called in early manhood to the service of Jehovah, he gave himself to his mission with a whole-hearted devotion and singleness of aim which suffered no abatement in the course of a long and strenuous life. The work of a prophet was the vocation of his life, and every faculty of his being, every source of influence open to him, his social position and even the incidents of his private history, were all made subservient to the one end of impressing the mind of God on his generation. And to this task he brought a nature richly endowed with gifts belonging to the highest order of genius. He is great alike in thought and action, and unites the profoundest religious insight with a wide knowledge of men and affairs. If any single quality can be selected as specially prominent in Isaiah, it is an imperious and masterful decision of character which makes him perfectly unhesitating in his judgements and inexorable in his demands. But more remarkable than any one feature is the balance and harmonious working of powers rarely combined in a single individual. In the union of statesmanlike sagacity with impassioned and dignified oratory he may be compared with some of the greatest names in the history of republican Rome; but

Isaiah had, besides, the rapt vision of the seer and the fervour of religious enthusiasm. We must not be afraid to think of him as a "visionary." His perceptions of spiritual truth were such as we call intuitive, and were frequently accompanied by experiences of an ecstatic kind. Although but one vision is recorded (ch. vi.), he uses several expressions which point to extraordinary mental processes as the form in which the will of Jehovah was communicated to him; and it is probable that the visionary element enters much more largely into his utterances than has been generally recognised. He speaks of himself as being in the "grasp of the (divine) hand" (viii. 11); and of Jehovah of Hosts as revealed "in his ears" (v. 9, xxii. 14): phrases which probably indicate that throughout life Isaiah was guided by that mysterious operation of the divine Spirit which appears to have been common to all the prophets. But whilst himself overmastered by the convictions that were thus conveyed to him, he manifests the most complete self-possession in the application of these truths to the circumstances of his time. In action as in speech he ever proves himself the sanest of men. His political vision is clear and untroubled, his judgement unerring, his maxims invariably reasonable and wise. "Never perhaps has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history[1]."

The literary quality most conspicuous in the writings of Isaiah is the wealth and brilliancy of his imagination. His thought constantly and spontaneously blossoms into imagery, and the images are no mere rhetorical embellishments but are always impressive in themselves and always the appropriate and natural expression of his idea. No other Old Testament writer has the same power of picturesque and graphic description, or has at

[1] Valeton, *Viertal Voorlezingen*, p. 33.

command such a variety of distinct and vivid impressions from nature. His memory is stored with pictures of rustic life, and these rise to his mind invested with a singular dignity and charm in the light of some inspiring and lofty idea. The reapers in the valley of Rephaim, and the beating of the olive trees (xvii. 5 f.), the ox and ass faithful to their master's stable (i. 3), the lion growling over his prey and defying the *posse* of shepherds gathered against him (xxxi. 4), the subtle rent spreading downwards in the wall until it falls with a sudden and terrible crash (xxx. 13 f.), the deserted hut of the vineyard-watchers after the vintage is past (i. 8), the trees of the forest waving in the wind (vii. 2), the pure white snow (which falls as far south as Hebron) (i. 18): these are some of the images which his poet's eye had gathered from scenes familiar to every native of Palestine. Nor does Isaiah's imagination fail him when he passes from the familiar to the stupendous, and calls up the destructive agencies of nature to set forth the awful terrors of the day of Jehovah. The forest conflagration (ix. 18, x. 16), the inundating flood of waters (viii. 7 f.), the thunderstorm (xxx. 30 f.), the earthquake (ii. 12 ff.) furnish him with emblems, strikingly effective, of the final catastrophe in which the existing order of things is to perish. On the other hand, there is a peculiar charm in the indistinctness of the descriptions of the latter days, where images of earthly comfort and security shade away imperceptibly into suggestions of a new creation, in which to our minds there is more of heaven than earth.

As a master of style Isaiah is supreme among the prophets. While others seem conscious of the labour of expression, he wields the resources of the language with the ease and dexterity of a perfect artist in words. There is an astonishing directness and sureness of touch in his phrase, as of one who knows when he has hit the mark and does not need to strike a second time. The high level of literary excellence maintained in the prophecies depends largely on the fact that they faithfully preserve (though doubtless with some elaboration) all the effects of the spoken word. The style is one obviously formed for the purposes

of the orator, who must carry his audience with him at the moment, trusting nothing to a sustained effort of attention on their part. Hence it is absolutely free from affectations and obscurities; and even the fondness for paronomasia which is often attributed to Isaiah is really shewn very sparingly and never without telling oratorical effect. It would hardly be possible to characterize the style of Isaiah better than by the four notes under which Matthew Arnold has summed up the distinctive qualities of Homer's genius: Plainness of thought, Plainness of style, Nobleness, and Rapidity. Enough has perhaps been suggested to illustrate the aptness with which each of these terms may be applied to Isaiah. In this case, as in others, the style is the man; and in the plainness, and nobleness, and rapidity of Isaiah's recorded discourses we read the signature of the glowing and impetuous nature, the lucid intellect, and the quick decision of character which made this prophet so great a force in the history of his time.

V.

Structure of the Book of Isaiah—Contents of Ch. I.—XXXIX.

The book which bears the name of Isaiah is in reality a collection of prophetic oracles, shewing manifest traces of composite authorship, and having a complicated literary history behind it. Not much less than two-thirds of its bulk consists of anonymous prophecies, all of which (with the probable exception of ch. xv. f.) are of an age long subsequent to that of Isaiah. To this class belongs first of all the whole of the latter part of the book, commencing with ch. xl., the date and authorship of which will be dealt with in the Introduction to the second volume of this commentary. But even when we confine our attention to ch. i.—xxxix. we still find abundant evidence of great diversity of authorship. Excluding the narrative section (ch. xxxvi.—xxxix.), it is estimated that of the prophetic chapters (i. xxxv.) a little over two-thirds is occupied

by genuine prophecies of Isaiah. In the following synopsis, passages which are probably to be assigned to other writers than Isaiah are marked by an asterisk; for the grounds on which this conclusion rests in each case, as well as for the dates attached to the Isaianic oracles, the reader must be referred to the Introductory Notes on the several sections.

ANALYSIS OF CHAPTERS I.—XXXIX.

This first part of the Book of Isaiah naturally falls into four main divisions: (A) ch. i.—xii.; (B) ch. xiii.—xxvii.; (C) ch. xxviii.—xxxv.; (D) ch. xxxvi.—xxxix. Of these the first three appear to have circulated as separate books, while the last is mainly an extract from the Second Book of Kings.

A. Ch. i.—xii. A volume of discourses mainly (though not exclusively) concerning "Judah and Jerusalem," as stated in the superscription (ch. i. 1). The grouping of the oracles seems to shew that the book was formed by the amalgamation of several minor collections.

i. Ch. i. is an introductory chapter setting forth the grounds of Jehovah's controversy with Israel. The separate oracles of which it is composed may all date from the early years of Isaiah's ministry, although the first part (vv. 1—17) is assigned by many critics to the time of Sennacherib (701).

ii. Ch. ii.—iv. A résumé of some of the very earliest discourses of Isaiah (ii. 6—iv. 1), with a prologue (ii. 2—4) and *an epilogue (iv. 2—6), both of Messianic import. The new title (ii. 1) suggests that this short collection once existed separately.

iii. Ch. v. 1—24 (somewhat later than the preceding) contains the parable of the vineyard (1—7), followed by a series of woes against the prevalent sins of the upper classes (8—24).

[Ch. v. 25—30 is the misplaced conclusion of the oracle against Northern Israel (see v. below).]

iv. Ch. vi.—ix. 7, a series of discourses written for the most part in the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitic invasion, and probably published shortly after that event. It consists of:

(1) A preface (ch. vi.), describing Isaiah's inaugural vision of God and consecration to the prophetic office.

(2) An account of the prophet's eventful interview with Ahaz, and prophecies arising out of it (ch. vii.).

(3) Further accounts of the prophet's activity during this period (ch. viii.).

(4) A prophecy of the Messianic deliverance and the coming of the Prince of Peace (ch. ix. 1—7).

v. Ch. ix. 8—21 [x. 1—4?] (and v. 25—30). Announcement of the impending ruin of the kingdom of Ephraim (written before the alliance with Syria).

vi. Ch. x. 5—34. A series of oracles dealing with the mission and fate of Assyria. The most probable date is between 711 and 701.

vii. Ch. xi. Two Messianic prophecies.

(1) *vv.* 1—9. The Messiah and his kingdom,—possibly an appendix to ch. x.; otherwise the date is uncertain.

*(2) *vv.* 10—16. The Return of Exiled Israelites from all quarters of the earth.

*viii. Ch. xii. forms a lyrical epilogue to the book (A).

B. Ch. xiii.—xxvii. A series of prophecies by various authors, mostly dealing with foreign nations.

*(1) Ch. xiii.—xiv. 23. On the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (written towards the close of the Exile).

(2) Ch. xiv. 24—32. Two oracles of Isaiah's, one (*vv.* 24—27) announcing the destruction of Assyria, the other (*vv.* 28—32) directed against the Philistines. The last is dated in the year of Ahaz's death; the other probably belongs to the same time as ch. x. 5 ff.

*(3) Ch. xv., xvi. On Moab. It is probably the work of an unknown early writer, revised with a postscript (xvi. 13 f.) by a later prophet.

(4) Ch. xvii. 1—11. On the overthrow of Damascus and North Israel (written at the time of the alliance between the two powers in the reign of Ahaz).

(5) Ch. xvii. 12—14. The destruction of the Assyrians (from the same period as xiv. 24—27).

(6) Ch. xviii. The same subject, in the form of a charge to Ethiopian ambassadors (from the beginning of Sennacherib's reign).

(7) Ch. xix. On Egypt. The date cannot be determined. *The last part (*vv.* 16—25) is a post-exilic addition.

(8) Ch. xx. On the fate of Egypt at the hands of the Assyrians. The date is 711.

*(9) Ch. xxi. Three oracles, on Babylon (*vv.* 1—10), on Edom (*vv.* 11, 12), and Arabia (*vv.* 13—17). Written near the end of the Exile.

(10) Ch. xxii. 1—14. A rebuke addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the end of the Assyrian invasion (701).

(11) Ch. xxii. 15—25. A philippic against a high court official named Shebna; probably from the time of Isaiah's opposition to the alliance with Egypt.

(12) Ch. xxiii. On Tyre. If the prophecy be Isaiah's, the date is probably either in the reign of Shalmaneser (c. 727) or that of Sennacherib. *The appendix (*vv.* 15—18) is post-exilic.

*(13) Ch. xxiv.–xxvii. A long eschatological prophecy of the world-judgement and the blessedness of Israel lying beyond it. The date is much disputed, but on the whole the most probable view seems to be that it belongs to the 4th century B.C.

C. Ch. xxviii. xxxv. A collection of oracles relating mostly (so far as they are Isaianic) to the period preceding Sennacherib's invasion.

i. Ch. xxviii. consists of four sections:

(1) *vv.* 1–6. Announcement of the fall of Samaria (written therefore before 722, but possibly republished as a preface to this group).

(2) *vv.* 7–13. An encounter between Isaiah and the dissolute courtiers of Jerusalem.

(3) *vv.* 14–22. A warning against the scoffing irreligious temper of the magnates who opposed Isaiah.

(4) *vv.* 23—29. A parable of Jehovah's providential dealings with Israel.

ii. Ch. xxix. contains

(1) A prediction of the humiliation and ultimate deliverance of Jerusalem (*vv.* 1—8).

(2) A rebuke of the spiritual blindness of the leaders (*vv.* 9—12), and the formalism of the popular religion (*vv.* 13, 14).

*(3) An allusion to the conspiracy with Egypt, passing abruptly into a description of the ideal future age (*vv.* 15—24).

iii. Ch. xxx. consists of five sections:

(1) A woe against the promoters of the Egyptian alliance (*vv.* 1—5).

(2) A vision of the Jewish embassy on its way to Egypt (*vv.* 6—8).

(3) Isaiah's denunciation of this step and the rebellious state of mind from which it proceeds (*vv.* 9—17).

*(4) A picture of the Messianic age (*vv.* 18—26).

(5) A judgement scene on the Assyrian king and army (*vv.* 27—33). Of doubtful genuineness.

iv. Ch. xxxi. A renewed denunciation of the Egyptian treaty (*vv.* 1—3); followed by a promise of mercy to Israel and a threat against Assyria (*vv.* 4—9).

v. Ch. xxxii. 1—8. A picture of the ideal commonwealth of the Messianic age.

vi. Ch. xxxii. 9—20. A censure of the careless demeanour of the women of Jerusalem (*vv.* 9—14); passing again very abruptly into a picture of the blessedness of the future (*vv.* 15—20).

*vii. Ch. xxxiii. A woe against an unnamed oppressor, the writer rising, through prayer, to the anticipation of the glories of the perfect kingdom of God.

*viii. Ch. xxxiv., xxxv. A prophecy of vengeance on Edom and of the future blessedness of Israel. (Post-exilic.)

D. *Ch. xxxvi.—xxxix. A historical section, narrating:

(1) Sennacherib's demand for the surrender of Jerusalem (ch. xxxvi. f.).

(2) Hezekiah's sickness and cure (ch. xxxviii.).

(3) The embassy of Merodach-baladan (ch. xxxix.).

If we compare this analysis with the sketch of Isaiah's career given above (pp. xxiv–xlvi), it is at once obvious that the book as a whole shews no consistent attempt at chronological arrangement. Not only are the anonymous prophecies interspersed amongst those of Isaiah, but even the genuine discourses of Isaiah stand in an entirely different order from that in which they were uttered. These facts, together with the obviously composite structure of the section A, point irresistibly to the conclusion that the book of Isaiah has reached its present form through protracted editorial processes, the details of which we can never hope to trace.

In explanation of this somewhat disconcerting result of criticism it may be desirable to call attention to a general characteristic of prophecy which ought here to be kept in mind. The prophets (at least the pre-exilic prophets) were in the first instance not writers of books but public orators. While they availed themselves of literature as a means of preserving the substance of their teaching, they relied chiefly on the immediate effect of their spoken words; and the methods by which their discourses were reduced to writing naturally varied with different prophets, or even with the same prophet at different times. In some cases little more than rough notes of the speeches might be preserved, in others they must have been carefully worked up into finished artistic compositions. Whether a particular prophet was ever led to prepare a complete edition of his prophecies depended on the exigencies of his individual position. In the case of Jeremiah we have an instructive account of the circumstances in which, under special divine direction, he addressed himself to this task (ch. xxxvi.); and the volume then written doubtless formed the basis of all subsequent editions of the book of Jeremiah. Nothing exactly similar to this is recorded of Isaiah: but he appears to have followed the practice of issuing written digests of his oral teaching at important junctures of his ministry. These separate rolls, and perhaps other prophecies which he had never given to the public at all, were probably treasured by his disciples and handed down to subsequent generations, until they ultimately found a place in one or other of the collections of which the present book is composed.

Of these aggregates the most interesting and the most complex is the first (A, ch. i.—xii.). The nucleus of the collection was probably an autobiographic volume written by Isaiah at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war; including originally ch. vi.—viii. 18, to which viii. 19—ix. 7 was added as a supplement. To this two separate rolls (ii.—iv. and v. 1—24) were prefixed perhaps for chronological reasons; the displacement of v. 25–30 was probably accidental and must have taken

place while the oracles were still detached. The great oracle on North Israel (ix. 8—21 also of early date) was placed where it stands because it does not bear directly on the destiny of Judah: and for a like reason it is naturally followed by the prophecy on Assyria (x. 5—34), to which the Messianic passage ch. xi. 1—9 may have already been attached. Another separate roll ch. i. may owe its position to its comprehensive character, and its obvious suitability to form an introduction to any volume of Isaiah's prophecies. The Messianic appendix to ii.—iv. (iv. 2—6), if it be post-exilic, as well as the addition of the late passages xi. 10—xii. 6, would indicate that the volume A was not made up till a time subsequent to the Exile.

The third collection (C, ch. xxviii.—xxxv.) may have had a history somewhat similar, though less intricate. It possibly originated with what Isaiah wrote when he retired defeated from the contest with the Egyptian party at court. How many of the present prophecies were included in this publication cannot be determined with certainty; but it doubtless contained all those referring to the Egyptian alliance, and therefore most of what we now read in ch. xxviii.—xxxi. Ch. xxxii. may have been added afterwards: ch. xxxiii. probably, and xxxiv., xxxv. certainly, belong to the post-exilic age. (See pp. 218 f.)

The intermediate collection (B, ch. xiii.—xxvii.) is of a different character. It is a series of miscellaneous oracles, most of them furnished with specific headings, in which the word *massa* (E.V. "burden") regularly occurs—a term found nowhere else in the book except in ch. xxx. 6. There is, indeed, no reason to suppose that in the intention of the compiler it was restricted to prophecies of Isaiah, although the fact that the first happened to bear his name naturally caused the whole to be attributed to him. Since with one exception (ch. xv. f.) the non-Isaianic passages are of exilic or post-exilic date, the collection cannot have been formed till a late period. It is not certain that the long apocalyptic prophecy of ch. xxiv.—xxvii. belonged to this group, although its position, at the close of a cycle of oracles dealing with the heathen world, is somewhat in favour of this

hypothesis. If so, the book must have been distinct from A and C down to a very late date, for if the three had been amalgamated, ch. xxiv. ff. would have found its appropriate place at the close, alongside of xxxiv. f.

The historical section (D) may be assumed to have been added as an appendix to the other three after they had been united. Thus for the first time all the scattered remains of Isaiah's work were brought within the compass of a single volume, which must again have for a time had a separate existence, until finally it was combined with the great prophecy of ch. xl.—lxvi. See further the Introduction to Vol. II (ch. xl.—lxvi.).

NOTE ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF ISAIAH'S TIME.

It is an accepted principle amongst modern historians and critics that a true chronology of the Hebrew kingdom must be based on the synchronisms established by the Assyrian monuments. From a very early time the Assyrians followed the system of naming each year after a high official of the empire; continuous lists of these eponyms were kept and have been discovered; and in these lists (the so-called Eponym Canon) we have a complete guide to Assyrian chronology, the accuracy of which has been confirmed by every test to which it has been subjected[1]. The Old Testament writers, on the other hand (at the time with which we are concerned), proceed on no fixed chronological system; their statements are frequently at variance with each other, and the attempt to treat them as absolute historical data often leads to inextricable confusion. In these circumstances there is no course open to us but to accept the evidence of the cuneiform inscriptions so far as it is available, and to fill in the details of the scheme as best we may. The most probable results are given in the annexed Table, where events that can be dated from Assyrian records are distinguished by bold figures. The dates are in some instances only approximate; and there are two dates of importance for Isaiah's biography, with regard to which it seems impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion.

[1] See Whitehouse, *Century Bible*, Isaiah, I. pp. 79 ff.

(1) The first is the year of Uzziah's death, which is also the year of Isaiah's call (ch. vi. 1). From 2 Kings xv. 7 we learn that Uzziah (Azariah) was succeeded by his son Jotham, to whom a reign of 16 years is assigned (*v.* 33). Since we know (Is. vii. 1) that Ahaz was on the throne in 735, this appears at first sight to give, as the lowest possible date for the death of Uzziah, the year 751. But if, as is probably the case, Jotham's 16 years were reckoned from the time when he assumed the regency on account of his father's leprosy (2 Kings xv. 5), we are really left without information as to the length of his independent reign or the date of Uzziah's death. The date given in the table (740) is an approximation merely. It can hardly be brought lower than this, because in 735 Isaiah is accompanied by a son, whose name, embodying an idea of the opening vision, shews that he must have been born after the prophet's call. Nor on the other hand can it be placed much higher without throwing the events of 701 into the extreme old age of Isaiah. The question is no longer complicated by the identification of Azriyau of Ya'udi (738) with Uzziah of Judah (see p. xii *n.*).

(2) A much more intricate problem is presented by the second controverted date, that of Hezekiah's accession. The difficulty here arises from the discrepancy of the biblical statements. The chief independent data are these:

(I) The Fall of Samaria (721) is said to have happened in the 6th year of Hezekiah (2 Ki. xviii. 10); his accession therefore must be dated about 727.

(II) The year of Sennacherib's invasion (701) is given as the 14th of Hezekiah's reign (2 Ki. xviii. 13 = Isa. xxxvi. 1), placing his accession about 715.

(III) At the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war (*c.* 735) Ahaz had just come to the throne (cf. 2 Ki. xv. 37 with xvi. 5; Isa. vii. 1 ff.); he reigned 16 years (2 Ki. xvi. 2); hence Hezekiah must have succeeded him about 720.

The dates of the siege of Samaria, the invasion of Judah, and the Syro-Ephraimite raid, being firmly established by Assyrian synchronisms there is no possibility of harmonising these three determinations. The best solution that could be hoped for would be a theory which rendered one of them probable and at the same time explained the errors of the other two. Now the most assailable of the three is undoubtedly (II). It is based on a late document, and is obviously bound up with the

extension of Hezekiah's life for 15 years (2 Ki. xx. 6). Here two alternatives present themselves: (*a*) the date may be purely conjectural, being arrived at by deducting from Hezekiah's total reign of 29 years (2 Ki. xviii. 2), the 15 years of added life predicted by Isaiah; or (*b*) it may be the correct date of Hezekiah's sickness (and of Merodach-baladan's embassy), and the mistake may simply be that the writer supposed these events to have happened about the same time as Sennacherib's invasion. On the latter assumption the Babylonian embassy would fall about 713 according to (I), or about 706 according to (III). Either date would be possible, although the second is much less probable than the first. See further pp. 279, 300 f.

On general chronological grounds the choice between (I) and (III) is difficult. A possible explanation of their divergence is suggested by the fact that the seven years difference between them is precisely the difference between two methods of reckoning the reign-lengths from Hezekiah to the end of the monarchy. When a king came to the throne (as would usually happen) in the middle of a calendar year, that year might either be assigned wholly to the deceased king, the following year being counted the first of his successor; or it might be reckoned twice—once as the last year of the expiring reign, and again as the first of the next. There is reason to believe that the second of these methods is that actually followed in the chronology of the books of Kings; so that to find the true period covered by a series of reigns we have to subtract from the sum of the reigns one year for each change of sovereign[1]. Now the sum of the reigns from Hezekiah to Zedekiah is 139½ years, which means on the supposition just stated a period of about 133 years. Reckoning backwards from the destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.) this puts the accession of Hezekiah in 720; and if we add 15 years for the reign of Ahaz, we come to 735 as the year of that king's accession,—a remarkably close approximation to the real date as fixed by Assyriological evidence. But if we were to ignore the double reckoning of the years in which a change in the succession took place, and carry back the accession of Hezekiah the full 139½ years from the Exile, we should be led to date it in 727, in agreement with (I); and we should then have to put the accession of Ahaz in 743, which is 8 years too early. Yet this appears to have been the opinion of

[1] See the *Century Bible* commentary on Kings, pp. 39 ff.

the author of the erroneous set of synchronisms which we find in 2 Ki. xvii. 1, xviii. 1, 9, 10. To him the 1st year of Hoshea, being the 12th of Ahaz, would naturally be 731 in our calendar; the 1st of Hezekiah, the 3rd of Hoshea, would be 728; and the year of Samaria's fall, = the 9th of Hoshea or 6th of Hezekiah, would be 722. It might seem therefore that the problem is completely solved by the assumptions: *first* that (III) represents the true chronology; and *second* that (I) rests on the faulty calculations of a post-exilic chronologist who did not understand the principle on which the lengths of the kings' reigns are reckoned. And on the whole this appears to us the most feasible explanation. Its one defect is that it does not enable us to account for the fact that after all the siege of Samaria is correctly dated in (I). We must either suppose that the writer of 2 Kings xviii. 10 had independent knowledge that 135 years elapsed between the fall of Samaria and the fall of Jerusalem, and adjusted his scheme to this datum; or else set down the accuracy of his determination of the former event to a singularly happy accident. The only other consideration that can be brought to bear on the question is the date of the oracle xiv. 28—32 in the year that Ahaz died. It seems to us that this prophecy finds a somewhat more suitable background in the circumstances of 720 than of 727.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

[Dates established by the Assyrian monuments are distinguished by heavy type.]

B.C.	
854	Ahab takes part in the Battle of Ḳarḳar.
842	Jehu pays tribute to Shalmaneser III.
745	Accession of Tiglath-pileser IV.
740	Assyrian capture of Arpad.
c. 740	Death of Uzziah. Year of Isaiah's call.
738	Subjugation of Hamath.
	Menahem pays tribute to Tiglath-pileser.
735	Syro-Ephraimite alliance against Judah.
	Accession of Ahaz.

B.C.	
734	Gilead and Galilee ravaged by Assyria: Pekah dethroned and slain.
732	Subjugation and annexation of Damascus.
727	Accession of Shalmaneser V.
722	Accession of Sargon.
721	Fall of Samaria.
	Merodach-baladan becomes king of Babylon for 12 years.
720	Sargon in Palestine: defeats Egyptians at Raphia.
720?	Accession of Hezekiah.
c. 720	Piankhi of Ethiopia invades Egypt.
717	Capture of Carchemish.
c. 712	Shabaka becomes king of Egypt (Ethiopian dynasty).
711	Capture of Ashdod.
709	Merodach-baladan expelled from Babylon.
705	Accession of Sennacherib.
704	Sennacherib vanquishes Merodach-baladan.
701	Assyrian invasion of Palestine: deliverance of Jerusalem.
691?	Death of Hezekiah.
c. 690	Sennacherib's expedition to Arabia.
c. 688	Tirhakah king of Ethiopia and Egypt.
681	Assassination of Sennacherib.
670 **667**	Assyrian conquest of Egypt.
608	Battle of Megiddo: Josiah slain.
c. 606	Capture of Nineveh by Medes: End of Assyrian Empire.
605	Battle of Carchemish.
587	Fall of Jerusalem.

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THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH

1 THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Ch. I. 1. The Superscription.

The verse is probably best understood as the heading of the first great collection of prophecies, ch. i. xii. The contents of these chapters are described with sufficient accuracy for the purposes of a title; whereas the phrase *concerning Judah and Jerusalem* is unsuitable to many of the later prophecies, and the note of time forbids us to limit the reference to ch. i. The second difficulty (but not the first) might be removed by accepting Vitringa's ingenious suggestion that the first half of the verse (down to "Jerusalem") was originally the title of ch. i., the latter part having been added in order to extend its scope to the whole book (i. xxxix.). Since, however, there is reason to suppose that ch. i. xii. once formed a separate volume (see Introduction, p. lxxix), it is better to adopt the view which most fully accounts for all the particulars of the superscription. There are several indications, noted below, that the verse was written not by Isaiah, but by a late editor.

The word *vision* is used here in the wide sense of a collection of prophetic oracles (cf. Nah. i. 1; Obad. 1). As the prophet was called a "seer" (*hozeh*), and his perception of divine truth was called "seeing," so his message as a whole is termed a "vision" (*hazon*). It is very improbable that Isaiah would have used the term in this vague sense. See further on ch. ii. 1, xxx. 10.

Isaiah the son of Amoz] On the name and parentage of the prophet, see Introduction, p. xxiv f.

concerning Judah and Jerusalem] as distinguished from prophecies on foreign nations, ch. xiii. ff. Isaiah himself always puts Jerusalem before Judah (iii. 1, 8, v. 8, xxii. 21).

in the days of Uzziah...Judah] The words indicate generally the period covered by Isaiah's public ministry. The author of the title probably understood that the vision of ch. vi. took place in the lifetime of Uzziah. It is not necessary to suppose that he assigned other prophecies to the reign of that king.

kings of Judah] An explanatory notice which would have been superfluous to contemporaries of Isaiah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD
hath spoken: I have [1]nourished and brought up children,

[1] Or, *made great and exalted* See Ezek. xxxi. 4.

CH. I. 2—31. THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE.

The passage may conveniently be divided into two main sections:—

i. *vv.* 2—20. The moral and religious issues involved in the great dispute between Jehovah and Israel.

(1) *vv.* 2, 3. Jehovah has discovered rebellion and ingratitude in the sons whom He has reared and brought to honour. This fact, disclosed to the spiritual perception of the prophet, is the basis of the whole subsequent argument.

(2) *vv.* 4—9. The prophet, in his own name, presses home the charge of rebellion; the divine accusation being "translated into passionate invective and threatening by the prophet" (Delitzsch) (*v.* 4). The evidence of Israel's sin is seen in the calamities of the land; why should they invite further chastisement by persistent disobedience? (5—8). It is of the Lord's mercy that they are not utterly consumed, like the Cities of the Plain (9).

(3) *vv.* 10—17. Does Israel imagine that Jehovah can be propitiated by costly rites and offerings? Nay, the whole system of ritual worship as practised by them is an intolerable insult to Him (10—15). The prophet's invective is aimed at a deep-seated fallacy of the popular religion. In opposition to this mistaken notion he demands moral reformation and public righteousness as the only service acceptable to God (16 f.).

(4) *vv.* 18—20. The conclusion of the argument. Jehovah summons the nation to a trial at law, and submits the alternative: prosperity as the reward of obedience, or destruction as the penalty of continued rebellion.

ii. *vv.* 21—31. The necessity for a purifying judgement. This is the prominent idea in the second division of the chapter, though a connexion of thought is much less obvious than in the first. The keynote is struck in

(1) *vv.* 21—26. A dirge over the decay of civic virtue in Jerusalem (21—23), followed by a threat of judgement (24 f.), and a picture of the city restored to its pristine purity (26).

[*vv.* 27, 28 are a late appendix to the elegy, emphasising its significance as a prediction both of the redemption of Jerusalem and the destruction of its unworthy citizens.]

(2) *vv.* 29—31. A detached fragment, describing the collapse of nature-worship among the Israelites.

The chapter, entitled by Ewald 'The Great Arraignment,' stands worthily as the introduction to Isaiah's prophecies. Its leading ideas—the breach between Jehovah and Israel, the inefficacy of mere ritual, the call to national repentance, the certainty of a sweeping judgement—are those which underlie not only Isaiah's teaching, but also that of all

and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his 3
owner, and the ass his master's crib: *but* Israel doth not

the pre-Exilic prophets; and these elementary principles are here presented with a force and clearness unrivalled in the Old Testament. Certain resemblances, both in thought and expression, to the 'Song of Moses' (Deut. xxxii.) have been noted by commentators, but the inference that this discourse is in any sense an imitation of that poem is on every ground to be rejected. The passage is probably a summary of several public utterances; these, however, have been worked up into a literary unity, and there is perhaps a presumption—though it is a slight one—that the original oracles belong to one and the same period of the prophet's activity.

What that period was cannot be determined with certainty. Critical opinion seems to gravitate more and more to the view that the first part of the chapter (*vv.* 2—17) belongs to the time of Sennacherib's campaign (B.C. 701). This conclusion is based chiefly on the historical allusions in *vv.* 7—9. But it is by no means clear that the expressions there used might not apply to the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion of *circa* 735 (see on *vv.* 7, 8); and there are one or two general considerations which plead for the earlier date. (1) A presentation of fundamental prophetic ideas so fresh and powerful as this points to the beginning rather than the close of Isaiah's career. (2) It is impossible to read *the whole chapter* in the light of Sennacherib's invasion. It would be surprising if a series of discourses uttered during that crisis should contain only a pair of doubtful indications of their historical setting; note in particular the absence of explicit allusions to Assyria. (3) In *vv.* 21—26 there is no trace of the eschatological ideas which occupied Isaiah's thoughts in the time of Sennacherib's invasion. It is admitted, moreover, that the allusions to idolatry (29 ff.) are more naturally understood of the reign of Ahaz than of that of Hezekiah, and no counter argument can fairly be drawn from the assiduous worship of Jehovah referred to in 10 ff. On the whole, though the evidence is indecisive, it seems not improbable that the passage contains a series of oracles from Isaiah's early ministry, compiled shortly after the attack by Rezin and Pekah (see on ch. vii). Fortunately the interpretation of the chapter is but little affected by the question of its date.

2, 3. The heart-rending complaint of Jehovah.

2. *the LORD hath spoken*] The inner ear of the prophet has heard the words which follow; he will utter them in trumpet-tones which shall cause all creation to hear and shudder. The apostrophe to the *heavens* and the *earth* has probably no other force than this (cf. Deut. xxxii. 1; Mic. vi. 1, 2; Jer. ii. 12), although Dillmann thinks they are appealed to as witnesses of all that has passed between the Lord and His people. The dramatic conception of a formal Assize, with Heaven and Earth for Assessors, the prophet for Herald, and so on, although a favourite one with commentators, is merely fanciful, and weakens the rhetorical effect of the passage.

4 know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation,
a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children
that deal corruptly: they have forsaken the LORD, they
have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged

nourished and brought up] The two expressions are synonymous, as in ch. xxiii. 4; Ezek. xxxi. 4. The first verb (lit. "make great") is common in the sense of rearing children, the second ("make high") has this meaning only here and in xxiii. 4 (but cf. Ezek. xxxi. 4); but there is certainly no need to differentiate the two expressions in the present connexion. Hence there is no reference to the greatness of Israel among the nations (marg.).

children] **sons**: the position of the word is emphatic. (Israel, the son of Jehovah, as Ex. iv. 22 f.; Deut. xiv. 1, xxxii. 5, 6, 18; Hos. xi. 1 ff.) The "sons" are not named here, attention being concentrated on the tragic fact that He who is Lord of all should know

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child."

have rebelled] The charge of rebellion in the mouth of Isaiah (only here: see *v.* 28) would include three things: (1) the sin of idolatry, (2) breaches of the moral law, (3) rejection of his own prophetic message (cf. *v.* 4). It is possible that the occasion of this revelation may have been some particular incident of the kind last mentioned, such as e.g. the decision of Ahaz to call in the help of Assyria (ch. vii.).

3. Israel's ingratitude is rebuked by the instinctive fidelity of the dumb animals to their human benefactors (cf. Jer. viii. 7). *Ox* and *ass* are mentioned, not as the most stupid animals, but as the only thoroughly domesticated animals of the Hebrews,—lodged probably under the same roof as their owner and his family.

4—9. The prophet speaks.

4. *seed* (i.e. race or brood, consisting) *of evildoers*] Cf. Matt. iii. 7, "brood of vipers." The indef. art. should be omitted in this clause and the preceding.

children that deal corruptly] lit. "that corrupt [sc. their way]" as Gen. vi. 12.

despised] by disregarding His admonitions (v. 24) or defying His power (Nu. xiv. 11, 23; Ps. x. 3, 13, &c.).

Holy One of Israel] i.e. "the Holy One who is Israel's God." Holiness was the aspect of the divine nature impressed on Isaiah's mind in his inaugural vision, and this phrase, common in his writings and apparently coined by him, sums up his fundamental conception of God in relation to Israel (see Introd., p. xlviii ff. and on ch. vi. below).

they are estranged and gone *backward*] A pregnant construction of a somewhat awkward kind. The words are wanting in the LXX., and are probably not original (comp. l. 5).

and gone backward. [1]Why will ye be still stricken, that ye 5
revolt more and more? [2]the whole head is sick, and [2]the
whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the 6
head there is no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises,
and [3]festering sores: they have not been closed, neither
bound up, neither mollified with oil. Your country is 7
desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land,
strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, [4]as

[1] Or, *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt &c.*
[2] Or, *every* [3] Or, *fresh stripes*
[4] Or, *as the overthrow of strangers*

5. *Why*] Many comm., following the Vulg., render "On what (sc. part of the body)." Their meaning is exactly expressed by the line of Ovid cited by Gesenius, "Vix habet in vobis iam nova plaga locum." The idea seems somewhat rigid, and hardly suits the clause immediately following. The translation "why" is thoroughly established by Hebrew usage, is supported by most ancient versions, and ought to be retained.

that ye revolt...] Rather (assuming the question) **will ye add to your apostasy?** Comp. xxxi. 6; Deut. xiii. 5; Jer. xxviii. 16.

the whole head...heart] Not as marg. "every head" (in spite of the absence of the Heb. art.). The commonwealth is conceived as a body, sorely wounded and sick unto death: afterwards its calamities are described literally (*v.* 7).

6. The state of the nation is indeed desperate; no remedial measures have yet been applied. In the simple surgery of Isaiah's time a wound was first **pressed** (to extrude suppurating matter), then **bandaged** and **softened with oil** (cf. Luke x. 34). See Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, III. 332.

7. The situation here described (which was undoubtedly *present* at the time of utterance) is that of a land ravaged by foreign troops (*land* is "cultivated land"). It has been contended that the word *strangers* (foreigners) must refer to the Assyrians, and could not be used of the allied Syrians and Ephraimites. But there seems no good reason why an army mainly composed of Syrians should not be designated as "foreigners"; and if the Edomites and Philistines harried the country at the same time (2 Chron. xxviii. 17 f.), the expression is still more appropriate.

and it is desolate...strangers] Lit., "and a desolation like an overthrow of strangers." If the text is sound it must mean "is such an overthrow as might be expected at the hands of strangers" (the so-called *Kaph veritatis*). This is a weak sense; and hence Ewald's plausible emendation, "like the overthrow *of Sodom*," has been accepted by most subsequent writers. The word for "overthrow" never occurs elsewhere except in connexion with Sodom (ch. xiii. 19; Deut. xxix. 23; Jer. xlix. 18, l. 40; Am. iv. 11). But even in this amended form the

8 overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is
left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of
9 cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts

clause has the appearance of a gloss on the word for "desolate" at the beginning of the verse, suggested by the mention of Sodom in *v.* 9.

8. *daughter of Zion*] A gen. of apposition = "the daughter, Zion." It is a personification either of the city or the population of Jerusalem, or both together. The capital is as yet spared, but its isolation in the midst of the devastated country suggests to the imagination of the prophet two homely and vivid pictures of forlorn and dreary solitariness: **like a booth in a vineyard, or a night-lodge in a cucumber field.** Such frail structures, consisting of four poles stuck in the ground, with cross-pieces supporting a couch and a slight roof or awning overhead, were erected for the watchers who guarded the fruit or crop from thieves and wild animals. (See Wetzstein's description in Del. *Comm. on Job*, Trans., vol. ii. p. 74, 2nd ed.)

as a besieged city] The sense of the word translated "besieged" is doubtful. Some render: "like a city under observation," others: "like a watch-tower."

An interesting parallel to the idea of the verse is furnished by Sennacherib's boast (in 701) that he shut up Hezekiah in his capital "like a bird in a cage." But the two pictures are quite distinct; and in any case it would be a mistake to rely on such a coincidence in support of the opinion that an identical situation is indicated.

9. *the LORD of hosts*] In Hebr. **Yahwe Zĕbā'ôth**, a peculiarly solemn title of the God of Israel, specially common in the prophetic writings: LXX. Κύριος παντοκράτωρ (All-sovereign Lord). The most satisfactory explanation of its origin is probably that which regards it as equivalent to "Yahwe (the God) of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. xvii. 45; cf. Ex. vii. 4). It is true that this cannot be the sense in which the phrase is used by the prophets, since it is a fundamental conception with them that Yahwe is no longer on the side of the hosts of Israel. But just as Amos took the phrase "day of Jehovah" from the lips of the people (see below on ii. 12), and gave it an interpretation diametrically opposed to the popular one, so he may have done also with this expression. If this be the correct view, "God of battles" may approximately reproduce the sense in which it is used by the prophets: Jehovah is still the Lord of Hosts, although He has disowned those of Israel. Other theories are that the "hosts" are the "host (sing.) of heaven," either (*a*) the stars or (*b*) the angels: these conceptions might be originally one, since the stars were regarded as animated beings (Jud. v. 20) fighting under Jehovah's leadership; (*c*) that they are the cosmic forces, or (*d*) the demons who were supposed to control these forces; or (*e*) in particular, the demons of war, which comes round nearly to the explanation given above. An original connexion with *war* is strongly suggested by the fact that in the books of Sam. the title is intimately associated with the ark,—a military emblem.

had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the LORD, ye [1]rulers of Sodom; give ear 10
unto the [2]law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To 11
what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?
saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams,
and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of

[1] Or, *judges* [2] Or, *teaching*

a very small remnant] The adverbial phrase "very small" might (disregarding the accents) be taken with the following clause, which would then read "we had all but been as Sodom, &c." (as in Gen. xxvi. 10; Ps. xciv. 17, cxix. 87). It is wanting, however, in the more important versions, and is probably an interpolation in the Heb. The word for remnant (*śārîd*) is only here used by Isaiah. He perhaps purposely avoids *she'ār*, which is used of the ideal remnant that inherits the hope of the future.

10 17. "The false and the true way of seeking God's favour" (Dillmann). The threatening aspect of public affairs (perhaps the approach of the Syro-Ephraimite army) had probably led to an unwonted display of zeal in the performance of the Temple ritual. Although the underlying thought of the people is that the bond between them and their God is maintained by sacrifice, &c., there is no reason to suppose that they are here conceived as consciously entering this plea in arrest of judgement. It is not till *v.* 18 that Jehovah calls the nation to answer His indictment.

10. *rulers of Sodom.. people of Gomorrah*] Note the singularly effective transition from the last words of *v.* 9. The word for "ruler" is the same as the Arabic *kādi* (found again in iii. 6, xxii. 3) and means strictly "decider," i.e. judge.

law of our God] Parallel to *word of the* LORD, as in ii. 3. The reference is not to the Mosaic Law, but to the prophetic revelation which follows (cf. v. 24, viii. 16, xxx. 9). The word *Tôrāh* (primarily "direction," then "instruction" or "teaching") was perhaps originally employed of the oral directions given by the priests on points of ritual or ethics (see esp. Hag. ii. 11; Jer. ii. 8, viii. 8, xviii. 18; Ezek. vii. 26); but is frequently used of the prophetic teaching (Jer. xxxi. 33; Is. xlii. 4, &c.). It appears always to denote *religious* instruction, even in such cases as Prov. i. 8, iii. 1, xiii. 14, &c. Of the Mosaic Law, Deut. i. 5, iv. 8, and very often.

11. *sacrifices*] the general term for *animal* sacrifices; *burnt offerings*, those entirely consumed on the altar; of the more ordinary kinds the deity received the *fat* and the *blood*.

fed beasts] **fatlings**; used only of sacrificial animals (except in xi. 6).

I am full of] **am sated with**. The idea of sacrifice as the food of the gods seems to belong to the original conception of the rite, and lingered

12 bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come [1]to
appear before me, who hath required this at your hand,
13 to trample my courts? Bring no more [2]vain oblations;
incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and
sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—[3]I cannot away with
14 iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and

[1] Or, as otherwise read, *to see my face*
[2] Heb. *an oblation of vanity.*
[3] Or, *I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting*

long in the popular consciousness even of Israel (Ps. l. 13). See Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites* (2nd ed.), p. 224.

12. *to appear before me*] Marg. (following one Hebr. MS.) suggests **to see my face**, which is grammatically easier, and in every way to be preferred. Here and elsewhere the traditional text has substituted the passive for the active so as to avoid the appearance of anthropomorphism. The phrase is a technical one, denoting the act of worship in the sanctuary: Ex. xxiii. 15, 17, xxxiv. 20, 23; Deut. xvi. 16, xxxi. 11; 1 Sam. i. 22.

to trample] the idea of desecration is implied. This ending of the question seems weak: LXX. rightly transfers the clause to the beginning of the next verse: **My courts ye shall no more trample; to bring oblations is vain**, &c.

13. *oblations*] The word is technically used of the meal-offering, but may embrace sacrificial gifts of every description (Gen. iv. 4).

incense is an abomination] So E.V. rightly, following the LXX. The Hebrew accentuation gives the sense, "it [the bringing of oblations] is abominable incense to me"; an attempt to modify the unqualified repudiation of sacrifice which lies in the prophet's words. The word "incense" meant originally the sacrificial smoke.

new moon and sabbath] Cf. 1 Sam. xx. 5, 24; 2 Ki. iv. 23; Am. viii. 5; Hos. ii. 11; Num. xxviii. 11, &c.; Ex. xx. 8; Gen. ii. 2, 3, &c. *assemblies* (lit. "calling together") is the word rendered "convocation" in the Pent. (see esp. Lev. xxiii.).

I cannot away with (**endure**)...*meeting*] Here again the division of clauses is at fault through following the Heb. accents. Read:

"New moon and sabbath...I cannot endure.
Fasting and festal gathering...my soul hateth."

iniquity and the solemn meeting] i.e. the combination of the two. The construction is extremely harsh. LXX. has "fasting and idleness"; apparently *ẓôm wĕʿaẓlāh*. The true reading must have been *ẓôm wa-ʿăẓārāh*, "fasting and solemn assembly" (Joel i. 14, ii. 15).

solemn meeting] (Jer. ix. 2), cf. 2 Ki. x. 20; Am. v. 21; Joel i. 14. A slightly different form is used in the Law for the great gathering on the last day of the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 36; Deut. xvi. 8, &c.). The original meaning of the word is probably

your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a [1]trouble
unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread 15
forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea,
when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands
are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away 16
the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to
do evil: learn to do well; seek judgement, [2]relieve the 17
oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.
Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: 18

[1] Or, *cumbrance* [2] Or, *set right the oppressor*

"tempus clausum." (See Robertson Smith, *Rel. of the Semites*, 2nd ed. p. 456.)

14. *appointed feasts*] the stated festivals dependent on the season of the year: see Gen. i. 14. *trouble* is literally **burden** (Deut. i. 12).

15. *your hands*] ("spread forth" in the attitude of prayer) *are full of blood*] a symbol of cruel wrongs perpetrated or tolerated, including the guilt of actual murder (*v.* 21).

16, 17. In opposition to this false service of God, Jehovah calls for social and moral reformation, and enunciates the true conditions on which the restoration of His favour depends.

17. *relieve the oppressed*] E.V. seems here to follow the LXX. and other versions. The Hebrew must be translated **set right the oppressor** (marg.)—restrain him within the bounds of justice; or "make him keep straight" (Gray).

fatherless...widow] those who have no natural protectors, and are always exposed to wrong when the administration of justice is weak or corrupt (cf. *v.* 23; ch. x. 2). To defend such is specially the duty of the judge, but it is also an obligation lying on every one who has influence in the community. The prophet addresses his hearers ("rulers" and "people" *v.* 10) as members of the state; and his demand is that by "seeking judgement" they shall exercise the fundamental virtue of citizenship. The righteousness which he requires is social righteousness, *iustitia civilis*, a public life so ordered as to secure for each individual his personal rights. The prophets' passion for justice is always inspired by a deep sense of the value of the human personality in the sight of God.

18—20. Jehovah condescends to plead.

18. *let us reason together*] more accurately, **let us implead one another** (Acts xix. 38, A.V.). The idea is that of a legal process in which each party maintains his own case (see ch. xliii. 26). It is felt by some comm. that the legal figure is inconsistent with an absolute offer of forgiveness in the two clauses which follow. The difficulty would be obviated by the subtle and attractive rendering (proposed, but now withdrawn, by Cheyne) "let us bring our dispute to an end"; but this is unsupported by grammar or usage. The second member of each

though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as
snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as
19 wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good
20 of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured
with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.
21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! she that was

sentence might be taken as an indignant question, "If your sins are... shall they be white...?"—or as an ironical concession, "Though your sins be...let them be white...!" The idea of pardon, however, may be retained, provided it be understood as conditioned by the alternative of *vv.* 19, 20. But see on the whole verse Barney, *Journal of Theol. Studies*, XI. 433 ff.

scarlet and *crimson* are really synonyms for one colour, properly "crimson." The dye in question was obtained from the dried and powdered bodies of an insect (*coccus ilicis*, in Hebr. *tôlaʿath shānî* – "bright worm"). There is perhaps no other instance of red used as a general symbol for sin, though white is the natural emblem of innocence (Ps. li. 7).

20. *ye shall be devoured with the sword*] For the idea cf. 2 Sam. ii. 26, xviii. 8. "Sword" is here taken as an acc. of instrument, a construction of doubtful validity in Heb. A more idiomatic rendering might be: **ye shall be made to eat the sword**. An exactly similar expression is used by the Arabs, although a Hebrew writer would probably have preferred to say "the sword shall eat you." Cheyne proposed to read "ye shall eat carob-pods," changing *ḥérebh* to *ḥārûbh*.

21 26. The elegy (*qînâh*), distinguished by a peculiar rhythm—the long line broken by a cæsura in such a manner that the second member is usually shorter than the first—and by the opening word *'êkāh*, "how!", is a frequent vehicle of prophetic utterance (see ch. xiv.). This is the clearest instance in the genuine writings of Isaiah, and it is characteristic of the 'city prophet' (Cheyne), that the subject is not the nation but the idealised capital. Isaiah is in a good sense 'laudator temporis acti.' He laments the degeneracy of Jerusalem, looking back probably to the days of David, when it was the abode of judgement and righteousness.

There are two equal strophes of six long lines each: the first (*vv.* 21—23) describing the present degenerate condition of the city; and the second (*vv.* 24—26) her restoration through judgement to her ancient renown. Metre and parallelism are on the whole very distinct, though obscured here and there by glosses; and most metrical critics (but not Duhm) think that half a line has been omitted in *v.* 25.

21. *the* (once) *faithful city*] The word for city (*qiryāh*) is poetic, and is again used of Jerusalem by Isaiah in xxix. 1.

an harlot] The idea conveyed is perhaps rather deterioration of character than infidelity to the marriage bond with Jehovah, an image

full of judgement! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed 22
with water. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of 23
thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards:
they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the
widow come unto them.

Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty 24
One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and

not used by Isaiah (as by Hos.). Hosea's influence, however, is seen not only in the general idea, but also in certain expressions.

righteousness (*ṣedeḳ*) is the principle of right action in individuals or the community: *judgement* (*mishpāṭ*) the embodiment of that principle in judicial decisions, use and wont, and the like. These qualities constituted the "faithfulness," trustworthiness, of the city.

Strict rhythm seems to require the omission of one of the clauses of *v.* 21; that which could best be spared is the last: "but now murderers" (Duhm).

22. *silver* and *wine* may refer to the great men of the city (*v.* 23), but more naturally to the "judgement" and "righteousness" of *v.* 21; all that was best in her, purity of morals, excellence of character, &c. The word for *mixed* occurs only here. The phrase is usually illustrated by the Latin "castrare vinum," the verb being taken as connected with that for "circumcise." Omit "with water" for metrical reasons.

wine] better: **choice drink**, found elsewhere only in Hos. iv. 18 (? Nah. i. 10).

23. *Thy princes are rebellious*] **Thy rulers are unruly** (Cheyne). In the Heb. a paronomasia, borrowed from Hos. ix. 15. The "princes" (*śārīm*) are the civil and military officials of the monarchical constitution, as distinguished from the *zeḳēnīm* (sheikhs or elders) of the old tribal system. The charge brought against them is that as a class they are corrupted by systematic bribery. They are *companions of thieves*, conniving at extortion and receiving in return a share of the spoil. Hence the *fatherless* and *widows*, having no bribes to offer, can obtain no redress; they cannot even find access to the seat of judgement.

24. Such men are *adversaries* and *enemies* of Jehovah, thwarting His wishes and purposes for His people. *the Lord*] "the Master" or **the Sovereign**. The title, used absolutely as here (*hā-'Adôn*), is almost peculiar to Isaiah, and is used by him only in introducing a threat (ch. iii. 1, x. 16, 33, xix. 4; cf. Ex. xxiii. 17, xxxiv. 23; Mal. iii. 1).

the Mighty One of Israel] **Israel's Strong One**, a rare word in Heb., first found in Gen. xlix. 24. See on ch. x. 13. *ease me*] Better: **appease myself**, and so again, **avenge myself**. By a bold anthropopathy the divine Being is compared to a man thirsting for vengeance.

25 avenge me of mine enemies: and I will [1]turn my hand upon
thee, and [2]throughly purge away thy dross, and will take
26 away all thy [3]tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first,
and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou
shalt be called The city of righteousness, the faithful city.
27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgement, and [4]her converts
28 with righteousness. But the [5]destruction of the trans-
gressors and the sinners shall be together, and they that

[1] Or, *bring my hand again* [2] Heb. *as with lye.* [3] Or, *alloy*
[4] Or, *they that return of her* [5] Heb. *breaking.*

25 resumes the first figure of *v.* 22, the judgement on Zion being likened to the smelting of impure ore. *turn* (or **bring back**) *my hand*] not in mercy, but, as usual, in judgement (Am. i. 8; Zech. xiii. 7).

throughly] lit. "as with lye" (marg.), i.e. potash, which was used as a flux to facilitate the separation of the metals. The grammar is still suspicious. Some, by transposing two consonants, obtain the sense "in the furnace."

26. The result will be the establishment of a pure administration in Jerusalem, as in the olden time, Zion once more worthy of her ancient name, **citadel of righteousness** (Cheyne), **faithful city**. The last expression, carrying us back to *v.* 21, marks the close of the elegy.

Two things are noteworthy in this passage. (1) The ideal is political. The salvation of Israel is secured when all public offices are filled with good men ("judges" and "counsellors"). (2) The ideal will be realised by a restoration of the best days of the past. In later prophecies Isaiah looks forward to a state of things far transcending anything that had been achieved in Israel's previous history. Such an anticipation as this is most naturally assigned to an early period of his career, before his eschatological conceptions had assumed a definite form.

27 describes the salutary and **28** the judicial aspect of the chastisement in more abstract terms than those hitherto employed. *her converts*] lit. "those in her who turn"; cf. "Remnant-shall-turn" in ch. vii. 3.

redeemed] A rare word in the book of Isaiah (only again in xxix. 22, xxxv. 10, li. 11; all non-Isaianic). It is doubtful whether the meaning is that she shall be redeemed from her own sins, or from the troubles they shall have brought upon her. So it is uncertain whether *judgement* and *righteousness* (cf. *v.* 21) are the virtues of the redeemed people, or the attributes of God manifested in the redemption. The former idea would be most in accordance with Isaiah's use of the words, but the latter, which is common in the later parts of the book, undoubtedly gives the best sense in this connexion.

28. *But the destruction...together*] Better as an exclamation: **But destruction of rebels and sinners together!** "Rebels," "sinners," "forsakers of Jehovah," as in *vv.* 2—4.

forsake the LORD shall be consumed. For they shall be 29
ashamed of the [1]oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall
be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For 30
ye shall be as [2]an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden
that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and 31
his work as a spark: and they shall both burn together, and
none shall quench them.

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning 2
Judah and Jerusalem.

[1] Or, *terebinths* [2] Or, *a terebinth*

29–31. The judgement will bring about a purification of religion, by revealing the folly of trusting in other deities than Jehovah.

29. *they shall be ashamed*] Some MSS. and Ancient Versions have the second person, possibly a mere correction. To be ashamed in Heb. often means to be disappointed in one's expectation (xx. 5 f.; Jer. ii. 36, &c.).

oaks] **terebinths** or "sacred trees." These and the *gardens* are emblems not of luxury, but of nature-worship. On "gardens" as seats of heathenish cults, see lxv. 3, lxvi. 17. The worship of sacred trees and sacred wells (which were probably the *numina* of the gardens [Duhm], see *v.* 30) are two of the most widely diffused and persistent forms of nature-worship, and are not extinct in Syria at the present day.

30. To the nature worshippers themselves the falling leaf of the (evergreen) terebinth and the failure of the spring in the garden, would mean the decay of the divine life which was supposed to animate these objects. To Isaiah, who recognises no divine life in nature but that of Jehovah, they are simply appropriate images of the collapse of superstition.

31. *the strong*] Apparently "the powerful man." The word occurs only once again, in Am. ii. 9 (again in connexion with trees).

and his work] A.V. "the maker of it" represents a possible but unsuitable translation of the Heb. This rendering assumes that "the strong" is a name for the idols; and apart from that there is no foundation for the idea that idolatry in the strict sense is contemplated. What kind of "work" is referred to we cannot tell, because of the fragmentary character of the oracle.

they shall both burn...quench them] The "work" is a spark and the worker like tinder. The idea is that the product of sin will become the means of the sinner's destruction.

CH. II.—IV.

In these three chapters we seem to have one of the minor collections of Isaianic oracles from which the present book of Isaiah has been compiled (see Introd., p. lxxix). That they once existed as a separate volume is strongly suggested by two circumstances. (*a*) The form of the

superscription (ii. 1) as compared with that of ch. i. 1. The repetition of the full designation of the prophet, without any note of time or subject specially applicable to what follows, would seem to indicate that this heading was written independently of the general title in ch. i. [The removal of ii. 1, so as to stand either before i. 28 (Condamin) or after ii. 4 (Steuernagel) is a very questionable critical expedient.] (*b*) The artistic unity and completeness of the section as a whole confirms the impression of its original independence. It contains (1) an introduction (ii. 2—4), describing the future glory of Zion as the religious metropolis of the world; (2) a series of discourses in which the prophet assails the prevalent vices and evils of his own day, and announces the judgement about to fall on the nation (ii. 5 [6] –iv. 1); and (3) a conclusion (iv. 2—6), shewing how through judgement the ideal set forth at the outset shall be realised in the blessings reserved for those who *escape* the judgement. The enclosing of the oracles of judgement between two passages of Messianic import affords clear evidence of literary design; which is admitted even by critics who (see below) question the Isaianic authorship of the opening and closing sections.

With regard to the date little difference of opinion exists, at least so far as the middle portion (ii. 6—iv. 1) is concerned. This is assigned with hardly a dissentient voice to the very earliest period of Isaiah's prophetic career. In ii. 6—22, the material prosperity attained under Uzziah still exists in undiminished splendour, and (since Isaiah did not receive his prophetic call till the year of that king's death) the passage is most naturally assigned to the succeeding reign, that of Jotham. Ch. iii. may have been written somewhat later. Its picture of anarchy may have been suggested by tendencies which Isaiah saw around him, caused by the removal of a strong hand from the helm; and at all events *v.* 12 (which, however, may be an isolated fragment) applies to no king so well as the weak and irresolute Ahaz. The whole passage is thus of great importance as a record of the impressions and ideas with which Isaiah entered on public life.

II. 1. On the scope of the heading see Introd. Note above.— *The word that...saw*] The combination of the verb "see" with the obj. "word" is not uncommon: Jer. xxxviii. 21; Hab. ii. 1; Am. i. 1; Mic. i. 1, and cf. Is. xiii. 1; Hab. i. 1 (*burden*). In such expressions both words have undergone a certain process of generalisation; "word" denoting the substance of the prophetic revelation, in whatever way received, and "see" (*hāzah*) describing the spiritual intuition by which the prophet was enabled to apprehend it. (See on ch. i. 1.)

Ch. II. 2–4. Zion the Centre of the Universal Religion in the Latter Days.

In this striking picture of the Messianic age the following features should be noticed:—(i) The preeminence, amongst the mountains of the world, of Zion, the acknowledged seat of Jehovah's universal dominion (cf. Jer. iii. 17; Ps. ii. 6, cx. 2, &c., also Ez. xl. 2). (ii) The extension of the true religion is effected, not by conquest, but by the moral

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influence of Israel's theocratic institutions on surrounding peoples (cf. Is. lx. 3). The submission of the nations is spontaneous; they are filled with eager desire to learn the ways of Jehovah (comp. Zech. ii. 11, viii. 22). Hence (iii) the nations retain their political independence. They are not conceived as absorbed in the Jewish nationality or as incorporated in a world-empire. Jehovah, not Israel, rules the world, and He rules it by His word, not by the sword. (iv) The authority of Jehovah, appealed to in all international disputes, brings war to an end, and ushers in an era of universal peace.

The representation is ideal, yet it contains little to which the hope of the Church does not look forward as the issue of the Christian dispensation. The only traces of the limitations of the Old Testament standpoint spring from the idea of Zion as the earthly centre of Jehovah's sovereignty. Even this has been understood literally by many Christians. But it is more in accordance with the analogy of prophecy to regard it as one of those symbols of spiritual truth, which, although conceived realistically by the prophets, were destined to be fulfilled in ways that could not be precisely revealed until the true nature of God's kingdom was disclosed by Christ.

The occurrence of this prophecy, with slight variations, in Mic. iv. 1—4, raises a difficult literary problem, for no one will now hold that the two prophets were independently inspired to utter identical words. Did Isaiah borrow from Micah or Micah from Isaiah, or both from some unknown earlier prophet? Against the first hypothesis it is pointed out that Micah's prophetic career had not begun till a time considerably later than the date of these chapters; hence if either prophet borrowed from the other the citation must be on the part of Micah. But against this it is urged that its position in Isaiah and the want of connexion with what follows mark it out as a quotation, and also that it is given by Micah in what appears to be, on the whole, the more original form. Hence the third alternative (originally propounded by Koppe in the 18th century) has been widely accepted by critics. On this view the utterance of an older prophet has been adopted by Isaiah and Micah as a "classic" and perhaps popular expression of the ideal to which they both looked forward. But a conclusion which is reached by a process of exhaustion cannot command much confidence, especially when the process is after all not exhaustive. The possibility of a later insertion in both places has to be seriously entertained, the connexion in both passages being somewhat loose; and it must remain doubtful whether either Isaiah or Micah is the real author. A certain presumption in favour of Isaiah's authorship is furnished by resemblances both in matter and style to other passages in the book (xi. 1—8, xxxii. 1—8) (so Duhm). This appears on the whole the most probable view; although the verses have to be isolated from their present context, and it is impossible to assign them to any definite period of Isaiah's life. The assertion that the conception presented would be unintelligible in the age of Isaiah may be disregarded. As Wellhausen remarks, the prediction is one that would be remarkable in any age; it is perhaps

2 And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the
mountain of the LORD's house shall be established [1]in the

[1] Or, *at the head*

even less surprising from the pen of Isaiah than from that of a later and lesser prophet.

In a poem where the *parallelismus membrorum* is so obvious, it is natural to look for a regular strophic arrangement: but none of the schemes proposed is entirely satisfying. According to Duhm there are three equal strophes of six lines each: (1) *vv.* 2*a*—*e*, 3*a*; (2) *vv.* 3*b*—*g*; (3) *v.* 4*a*—*f*. Perhaps a better division is that given by Marti and adopted by Gray (p. 42), which recognises five strophes of four lines each, the last being completed by the inclusion of the first two lines of Mic. iv. 4 as an original distich of the poem, thus: (1) the elevation of Zion, *v.* 2*a*—*d*; (2) the concourse of nations, *vv.* 2*e*, 3*a*—*c*; (3) their quest for religious enlightenment, *v.* 3*d*—*g*; (4) Jehovah's moral arbitrament, *v.* 4*a*—*d*; (5) the passing of war, *v.* 4*e*, *f* + Mic. iv. 4*a*, *b*.

2. *And it shall come to pass*] This formula (so common in continuous discourse) nowhere else introduces a prophetic oration (Ez. xxxviii. 10 is not really an exception), and shews that the passage has been detached from its original context. *in the latter days*] lit. "in the sequel of the days." The phrase in itself denotes simply the (remote) future, and is so used in Gen. xlix. 1; Num. xxiv. 14; Deut. iv. 30; xxxi. 29. An exact Assyrian parallel to this use (*akhrat ûmi*) is given by Cheyne and Delitzsch. By the prophets the expression is often specialised in an eschatological sense, as in Hos. iii. 5; Ez. xxxviii. 16 (cf. *v.* 8), and probably Jer. xlviii. 47, xlix. 39, where it means (as here) the final age of the world's history following the establishment of the kingdom of God. In Jer. xxiii. 20, xxx. 24, the vaguer sense is more probable.

the mountain of the LORD's house] the Temple mount, which is the seat of Jehovah's government. The exact phrase occurs nowhere else, except in the parallel passage in Micah; but cf. Mic. iii. 12 ("mount of the house"); 1 Macc. xvi. 20 ("mount of the temple"). In the next verse it is resolved into the two members of a parallelism: "mountain of Jehovah" and "house of the God of Jacob." *established in the top of...*] Better as marg. **at the head of**...(cf. 1 Sam. ix. 22; Am. vi. 7); although the translation "as the chief of the mountains" would also be admissible (Davidson, *Synt.* § 101 R, 1 a.). A miraculous physical elevation of Zion may possibly be thought of (Ez. xl. 2; Zech. xiv. 10); but the idea (seriously entertained by some) that Zion is to be literally set on the top of the other hills is too grotesque to be attributed to any prophet, save under compulsion. In this passage a metaphorical exaltation, in respect of political and religious importance, seems to satisfy all the requirements both of syntax and exegesis (cf. Ps. lxviii. 15 f.).

top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills;
and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall 3
go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of
the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will
teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out
of Zion shall go forth [1]the law, and the word of the LORD
from Jerusalem. And he shall judge [2]between the nations, 4
and shall [3]reprove many peoples: and they shall beat their
swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks:

[1] Or, *instruction* [2] Or, *among* [3] Or, *decide concerning*

all (the) *nations shall flow*] Properly "shall stream," a verb only used figuratively of the movement of masses of men to great centres of intercourse like Babylon (Jer. xxxi. 12, li. 44). The idea is frequent in later prophecy: e.g. ch. lx.; Jer. iii. 17; Hag. ii. 6, &c. Instead of "all the nations" Micah has (in harmony with *vv.* 3 f.) simply "peoples," which probably preserves the original text. The universality of the true religion is in either case implied; and the bare suggestion is perhaps more effective than an explicit assertion would be.

3. The conflux of nations explained by the desire, everywhere expressed, to know and practise the ways of Jehovah. Cf. Zech. viii. 20, 21.

and he will teach us...and we will walk] Or **that He may teach us... and that we may walk**. The verb for "teach" is that from which the noun "*Tôrah*" (i. 10) is derived; hence the instruction must be conceived as communicated through the agency of prophets like Isaiah.

of his ways] The preposition has a partitive sense (cf. Ps. xciv. 12): "somewhat of his ways"; each people receiving such direction as is adapted to its peculiar circumstances. The "ways" and "paths" of Jehovah, denoting the revealed principles and maxims of religion and ethics, are figures too frequent in the O.T. to need detailed references.

for out of Zion ...Jerusalem] These may be either words of the prophet, looking into the future, or of the peoples themselves as they exhort one another to go up to Jerusalem. In the latter case the verbs should be rendered in the present tense.

the law] **i.e.** *Tôrâh*, "teaching" (no article). See on i. 10.

4. Jehovah's righteous judgement causes "wars to cease to the ends of the earth."

among *the nations*] Here again Micah's language is more indefinite: "many peoples"; "strong nations afar off."

reprove] **arbitrate for**; or, as marg., "decide concerning." Cf. Gen. xxxi. 37; Job ix. 33 ("umpire," R.V. marg.). The meaning of course is that disputes which would otherwise have been settled by the sword are referred to the just and impartial arbitrament of Jehovah, whose award is accepted as final.

they shall beat...pruninghooks] For the figure cf. Martial's "falx

nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

ex ense" (Ep. xiv. 34), and on the contrary Ovid (*Fast.* I. 699), "sarcula cessabunt, versique in pila ligones": also Joel iii. 10. The word rendered "ploughshares" is found only in 1 Sam. xiii. 20 f. and in the parallels in Micah and Joel. Perhaps "mattock."

The cessation of war is a prominent idea in Messianic prophecy. See esp. Hos. ii. 18; Zech. ix. 10; and on Is. ix. 5 below.

The closing distich in Mic., which may be genuine (see above), reads

"And they shall sit each under his vine, and under his fig-tree,
none making afraid."

Ch. II. 5—22. The Day of the Lord.

The main structure of the passage may be exhibited as follows: —

i. (*vv.* 6—11). The causes and consequence of Jehovah's rejection of His people. Having surveyed the symptoms of apostasy and ungodly pride which are everywhere around him —foreign superstitions (6), display of wealth (7 *a*), confidence in military resources (7 *b*), idolatry (8), —the prophet announces a Day in which all human glory shall be humbled in the dust by the self-manifestation of the Almighty (10, 11). This leads on to

ii. (*vv.* 12—17). A powerful description of the great "Day of the Lord": a judgement directed against all that is "high and lofty" (12); i.e. everything, whether in nature (13 f.) or in human civilisation (15 f.), which seems to lift its head against the majesty of Jehovah (17).

iii. In *vv.* 18—21 the prophet returns to the subject of idolatry as the crowning sin of Israel, describing the sudden despair and ignominious discomfiture "in that day" of all who put their trust in false gods. [The last verse (22) is a late interpolation.]

The essential unity of this section is generally admitted: the central theme is the Day of Jehovah (12—17): what precedes is the motive, and what follows is the effect, of that final judgement. But a close analysis of its structure raises questions of extreme complexity, which cannot be fully investigated here. Two things in particular are thought to indicate extensive textual confusion: viz. (*a*) the recurrence, at very irregular intervals, of a *twofold refrain*: and (*b*) an apparent *duplication* of subject and rhythm in *vv.* 18—21.

(*a*) Of the two refrains, one (A) culminates in the line

And Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day (*vv.* 11, 17);

and the other (B) in the distich

From the terror of Jehovah and from His glorious majesty,
When He arises to terrify the earth (*vv.* 10 [LXX.], 19, 21);

either of which would be a suitable strophic ending in a poem on the Day of Jehovah. And each of these is preceded by lines which though not verbally identical are closely similar (with an additional snatch

from A in *v.* 9f. Are all these to be reduced to exact conformity? And which of them gives the key to the strophic division? Or does one mark the beginning and the other the end of the strophe; and if so which is which? Or finally are both to be combined in one long refrain (AB or BA)? Any one of these suggestions might find support in one part of the text or another; and none can be carried through satisfactorily.

(*b*) Similar uncertainty is created by the parallelism within the last division. Here *vv.* 19 and 21 consist of the refrain B; while *vv.* 18 and 20 deal with the same theme,—the vanishing of the idols. Have we, then, two mutilated strophes of the original poem, or are 18, 19 and 20, 21 variants (also mutilated) of a single original strophe? The prosaic style of *v.* 20 is thought by most to stamp it as the effort of a late reader to explain to himself the singular thought of *v.* 18f., that the idols themselves shall creep into caves and holes. But this does not quite account for the repetition of the refrain in *v.* 21.

Among the endless possibilities thus opened up, a few actual theories may be briefly described. Duhm separates two poetic fragments which have been accidentally mixed up: (1) *vv.* 6—10 + 18—21, with strophes marked by refrain B at 10. 19, 21. (He regards 20f. as a doublet of 18f.) (2) *vv.* 11—17, beginning and ending with refrain A. Marti saves the unity of the passage by distinguishing two equal strophes with B as an opening and A as a closing refrain: viz. *vv.* 6—9 [11] (restoring B before *v.* 6.; and 10 + 12—18. Gray reaches a very similar construction by simply transferring the refrain *v.* 19 from the end of the passage to the beginning. Condamin resolves the verses into two quite unequal and dissimilar stanzas, 6—8 and 10—18; the former without refrain, the latter a balanced strophe of which 12—16 form the nucleus, and 10, 11 respond respectively to 19, 17. Sellin[1] recognises but a single (closing) refrain (BA), which has been preserved nearly intact in 17—19, and mutilated almost beyond recovery in 9—11. H. Schmidt follows in the main the division of the traditional text given at the beginning of this Note, with excision of 9, 11*a*, 18f. (as a variant of 20f.), and with the repetition of the refrain B at the close of the poem.

None of these theories is sufficiently convincing to be made the basis of exposition. We therefore adopt the rough analysis given above, and must be content to point out, without attempting to solve, the difficulties presented by the received text.

5 is apparently a transition verse (cf. Mic. iv. 5), "Since this great destiny is ours, O House of Jacob, let us at least for ourselves rise to the height of our privileges. But how vain is the exhortation! (6) For Thou, Jehovah, hast rejected, &c." Or, the prophet may be supposed to cut short abruptly a line of thought he meant to pursue, and to make a fresh start at *v.* 6. But neither of these views is plausible enough to remove the impression that *vv.* 2—4 are not the original introduction to 6ff.

[1] *Der alttest. Prophetismus*, p. 142.

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light
6 of the LORD. For thou hast forsaken thy people the house
of Jacob, because they be filled *with customs* from the east,
and *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, and they strike
7 hands with the children of strangers. Their land also is full
of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures;
their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of
8 their chariots. Their land also is full of idols; they worship

light of the LORD] Not the "light of His countenance" (as Ps. lxxxix. 15, xliv. 3), but of His Revelation (cf. Is. li. 4).

6—9. The evidences of the nation's apostasy.

6. *For thou hast forsaken*]—a strong word, used twice (Deut. xxxii. 15; Jer. xv. 6) of Israel's rejection of Jehovah, more frequently (Jud. vi. 13; 1 Sa. xii. 22; 1 Ki. viii. 57; Jer. vii. 29, xii. 7, &c.) as here with Jehovah as subj. and Israel as obj. *filled* with customs] An old and plausible emendation (*mĕ'ŏn* for *mĕ'ōnîm*) gives the sense "filled with sorcery." Possibly both words were written ("with sorcery from the east"), one having been dropped in copying because of their resemblance. "The east" would include Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, perhaps also Babylonia, "the classic land of magic."

soothsayers] It is not certain what particular form of divination is indicated by the name. Some take it as derived from the word for "cloud": "cloud-compellers," i.e. rainmakers; others from the word for "eye" = those who cast the spell of the "evil eye." On divination amongst *the Philistines* see 1 Sam. vi. 2; 2 Ki. i. 2; but these instances indicate nothing characteristic. *strike hands with*] i.e. "form alliances with." The expression is not found elsewhere, and the rendering is uncertain. Dillmann thinks that "children of strangers" must mean "foreign youths," who were in request as sorcerers, but the wider sense ("strangers," simply) seems preferable. It is probably better (with Hitzig) to read *bîdê* ("with the hands of") instead of *bĕyaldê* ("with the children of"), rendering simply: "join hands with strangers."

7. *Their land also is full...*] Lit. **and its** (the people's) **land has become filled** (and so throughout *vv.* 7, 8). *silver and gold...treasures*] The wealth of the country had increased enormously through commercial activity and the control of the Red Sea traffic (2 Kings xiv. 22) in the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham. These "treasures" were partly expended in procuring "horses and chariots," as in the time of Solomon. The prophets condemn all such accumulation of earthly resources, as tending to lead the nation away from reliance on the help of Jehovah. Cf. Deut. xvii. 16, 17, xx. 1; Is. xxxi. 1; Mic. v. 10; Zech. ix. 10.

8. *idols*] "nonentities."—The word (*'ĕlîlîm*) is first used by Isaiah; and appears to contain a scornful play on the word for "gods" (*'ĕlîm*). Whether it was coined by Isaiah, or borrowed from ordinary speech,

the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers
have made. And the mean man [1]is bowed down, and the 9
great man [2]is brought low: therefore forgive them not.
Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before 10
the terror of the LORD, and from the glory of his majesty.
The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the 11
haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD
alone shall be exalted in that day. For [3]there shall be a 12

[1] Or, *boweth down* [2] Or, *humbleth himself*
[3] Or, *the LORD of hosts hath a day*

may be uncertain; but in prophetic usage it survives only as an expression of contempt. *work of their own hands*] The prophet refuses to distinguish, as a heathen might, between the false deity and his image; the latter alone has real existence. Cf. xvii. 8; Hos. xiii. 2; Is. xl. 19 f., xli. 7, xliv. 12—20, &c.

9. *is bowed down...is brought low*] The verbs may be understood either in a reflexive or a passive sense (cf. marg.). In the former case, the reference must be to the degradation of human dignity involved in idolatry and superstition, a thought not unworthy of Isaiah. It is more probable, however (see ch. v. 15), that the words refer to the judgement at hand, which is as certain as if it had already taken place. But the resemblance to 11 *a*, 17 *a* may shew that the clause is a stray fragment of the refrain, here thrust into an impossible context through some accident of transcription.

mean man...great man] In the original the contrast is expressed by two words for "man," corresponding to *homo* and *vir* in Latin, *Mensch* and *Mann* in German, &c. Sometimes, as here, the distinction is emphasised so as to mark a contrast (Ps. xlix. 2).

therefore forgive them not] The verbal form employed in the Heb. (jussive) properly expresses the will or desire of the speaker (as E.V.), but in negative sentences it "sometimes expresses merely the subjective feeling and sympathy of the speaker with the act" (Davidson, *Synt.* § 128, R. 2). It is difficult in any case to think that the words were written by Isaiah. The idea is here out of place; and in all probability we have to do with the interjection of a pious scribe transferred from the margin into an already corrupt text.

10, 11. The two refrains: see Introd. Note above. In the LXX. *v.* 10 ends as *vv.* 19, 21 with "when He ariseth to terrify the earth," which may safely be restored here. Although the strophic arrangement cannot be clearly traced, the verses certainly express the keynote of the discourse.

10. *Enter into the rock*] The clefts and caverns (see *vv.* 19, 21) which abounded in the limestone rock of Palestine were used as natural hiding-places in time of invasion (Jud. vi. 2; 1 Sam. xiii. 6, xiv. 11). Cf. the still more impressive representation, Hos. x. 8.

11. *in that day*] The day to be now described in *vv.* 12—16.

day of the LORD of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up: and it shall be
13 brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are
14 high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are
15 lifted up; and upon every lofty tower, and upon every
16 fenced wall; and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon

12–16. The conception, although in the highest degree poetic, is not allegorical. Trees, mountains, ships, &c. are not emblems of kings, magnates, commerce and the like: the destruction of all that is imposing and sublime in nature or art is itself the concrete expression of the idea that "the LORD alone shall be exalted."

12. *For there* **is** *a day of the LORD of hosts*] Better than marg. "For the Lord of hosts hath a day." What the prophet asserts is that there *is* a "day of Jehovah," in the sense in which he has to announce it. From Am. v. 18 we learn that the phrase and the idea were already familiar to the people, but understood in a sense favourable to themselves. The origin of the conception is thus lost in antiquity. It may be that the word "day" was interpreted as "day of battle," Jehovah's "day" being the day of His victory over the enemies of Israel (see Robertson Smith, *Proph. of Israel*, 2nd ed. pp. 397 f.). But this seems too narrow a basis for the idea as it appears in the prophetic theology, where the expression is a standing designation for the final manifestation of Jehovah to judge Israel and the world. Here the underlying representation is that of the *theophany*, the visible apparition of Jehovah in person, accompanied by a physical cataclysm in which the natural world order is broken up. It is obvious that a world-wide judgement is contemplated.

and it shall be brought low] The Heb. might be rendered simply "[high] and low"; but neither sense is suitable. A synonym for *height* is required by the parallelism of the strophe. This has been preserved in the conflate rendering of the LXX. (καὶ μετέωρον καὶ ταπεινωθήσονται), where the last two words represent the present corrupt Heb., and the other two presumably the original text (וְנִשָּׂא or something similar). Read, accordingly: [lifted up] **and high.**

15, 16. Works of human art are last mentioned as being nearer to the sinful pride of man, which is the ultimate cause of the judgement.

16. *ships of Tarshish*] The largest class of merchant vessels then used. They were first built by the Phœnicians for the long voyage to Tartessus (Tarshish) in Spain; but the name (like our "Indiaman") was applied to large ships whatever their destination. *pleasant imagery*] An obscure expression, found only here and unintelligible in this connexion, where a parallel to "ships" is wanted. The noun is thought to be derived from a verb meaning "to see," and this lends itself to a variety of senses represented by Versions, or proposed by exegetes. The rendering of R.V. seems to rest on the analogy of a cognate Heb.

all pleasant [1]imagery. And the loftiness of man shall be 17
bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought
low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.
And the idols shall utterly pass away. And men shall go 18
into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the [2]earth, 19
from before the terror of the LORD, and from the glory of
his majesty, when he ariseth to shake mightily the earth. In 20
that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his
idols of gold, which they made for him to worship, to
the moles and to the bats; to go into the caverns of the 21
rocks, and into the clefts of the ragged rocks, from before
the terror of the LORD, and from the glory of his majesty,
when he ariseth to shake mightily the earth. [3]Cease ye 22

[1] Or, *watch-towers* [2] Heb. *dust*.
[3] The Sept. omits this verse.

noun (Num. xxxiii. 52; Prov. xxv. 11); that of R.V. marg. "watch-towers" on the Peshitto (see Cheyne, *Comm.* II. p. 137): cf. Vulg., "omne quod visu pulchrum est." It has been suggested that it may be an unknown name for "ships."

18—21. A special feature of the judgement will be the extinction of idolatry everywhere.

18. *And the idols...away*] Or, with a slight vocalic change, "And the idols [shall be] like a night that passes away." But the extreme shortness of the verse suggests that the text may have suffered mutilation at this point.

19. *men shall go*] Rather, "they (the false gods) shall go."

caves of the rocks...holes of the **dust** (marg.)] see on *v.* 10 above.

to shake mightily the earth] The strict rendering is **to terrify the earth**: a paronomasia in Heb., easily imitated in Latin, "ut terreat terram." There is an undoubted allusion to an earthquake. Isaiah must have experienced the great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah (Am. i. 1; Zech. xiv. 5); and the deep impression made on his youthful mind furnished him with a presentiment of the terror of the great day of Jehovah.

20. A prosaic paraphrase of the thought of *v.* 18. See Introd. Note, p. 19. *which they made for him*] Without much violence to the text we may read (עָשׂוּ): **which he made for himself**, cf. *v.* 8.

to the moles and to the bats] The sense is certain, although an accidental division of the word for "moles" in the received text has produced a false punctuation and misled some older interpreters. Read *laḥăpharpārôth*.

21. The refrain of *vv.* 10, 19, with some modifications. Translate: **to enter into the hollows of the rocks and clefts of the crags**, &c.

from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he
to be accounted of?
3 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take

22. *whose breath...nostrils*] A translation both weak and ungrammatical. Render: **in whose nostrils is** (but) **a breath.** The breath of the nostrils symbolises the divinely imparted principle of life in man (Gen. ii. 7); and the meaning of the clause is that man's life is frail and perishable as a breath (cf. Job vii. 7).

This verse is not found in the LXX., and is rightly regarded as a later insertion in Isaiah's prophecy.

CH. III. 1—IV. 1. INTERNAL DISORDER THE PENALTY OF MISGOVERNMENT AND LUXURY IN JUDAH.

The chapter, while pervaded by a certain unity of sentiment and outlook, appears to consist of four distinct pieces:—

i. *vv.* 1—12. A vision of Anarchy.

(1) The Lord is about to remove all the existing pillars of the state, and hand over the land to the miseries of incompetent and capricious government (1–4). A state of anarchy will ensue, which will be felt to be intolerable even by those who have helped to bring it about. A graphic picture is presented of the futile efforts of the people to restore some semblance of authority (5—7).

(2) The reason of this visitation is next stated; the unblushing wickedness which prevails in the land has provoked the "eyes of Jehovah's glory," the chief guilt lying at the door of the court and the nobles (8—12).

ii. *vv.* 13—15. A vision of Judgement: Jehovah appears in person and sternly calls the authorities of His people to account for their abuse of the trust committed to them.

iii. *vv.* 16—24. A diatribe against the frivolity and extravagance of the ladies of Jerusalem, combined with a threat of the degradation in store for them.

iv. Ch. iii. 25—iv. 1. A picture of the desolation of the city, bereft of her defenders, who have fallen in war (25, 26), and the desperate efforts of the surviving women to find husbands (iv. 1).

Throughout the passage the prophet's point of view is somewhat different from that occupied in ch. ii. 6 ff. There it is the religious aspect of the people's sin that is emphasised: pride, idolatry, and reliance on wordly power; here it is dealt with in its social aspect, as misgovernment, cruelty, luxury, &c. Again, the background is more political, less distinctively eschatological, than in ch. ii. There the judgement is represented as an overpowering physical catastrophe; here it is conceived as a dissolution of the invisible bonds of society and a setting loose of the unruly passions of men to prey upon each other. This vivid apprehension of the evils of anarchy is instructive as the earliest indication of the statesmanlike quality of Isaiah's genius, and

away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the 2
mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the diviner, and the [1]ancient; the captain of 3
fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the

[1] Or, *elder*

his profound sense of the value of good government as the primary condition of national well-being.

1—4. The collapse of the social fabric is to be brought about by the removal of the classes that contribute to the order and stability of the state. The state of things described might be the effect either of war and captivity (cf. 2 Ki. xxiv. 14; Jer. xxiv. 1; xxix. 1) or of a political revolution. The former view is the more natural, but it should be noted that in ch. ix. 8 ff. (addressed to North Israel, and nearly contemporary with this) a period of revolutionary anarchy *precedes* the crowning disaster of the Assyrian invasion.

1. *the Lord, the LORD of hosts*] as in i. 24: **the Sovereign, Jehovah of Hosts.**

stay and staff] The second word is the fem. form of the first. The conjunction of similar-sounding words (like "bag and baggage" in English) frequently expresses exhaustiveness. The meaning is simply "every kind of prop." Cf. Nah. ii. 10; Zeph. i. 15.

the whole stay...water] This explanation is exceedingly unnatural in view of the enumeration which follows. The clause is probably a marginal gloss (readily suggested by "staff of bread" in such passages as Lev. xxvi. 26; Ez. iv. 16, v. 16, xiv. 13; Ps. cv. 16) which has crept into the text.

2, 3. A list of the officials and prominent persons who form the "props" of society. No clear principle of arrangement can be traced, although the titles tend to fall into pairs, and those in *v.* 3 are perhaps of less distinction than those in *v.* 2. Three orders can be distinguished: (1) military—hero, soldier, captain of fifty; (2) civic—judge, elder, "honourable man," counsellor; (3) religious—prophet, diviner, enchanter, &c. The art. is better omitted throughout as in Heb.

2. *the mighty man, and the man of war*] **hero and man of war.** The profession of arms naturally stands first, Judah being still a military power of some pretensions. The word rendered "hero" (*gibbôr*) was used technically of the members of the royal body-guard; we might render "guardsman and soldier."

The *prophet* is the professional prophet, scarcely distinguishable from the *diviner* with whom he is bracketed. The word for *ancient* is that usually translated **elder.**

3. *honourable man*] lit. "man of respect" (ix. 14); either one high in the king's favour (2 Ki. v. 1) or a man of good social standing, without official rank (Job xxii. 8).

4 cunning [1]artificer, and the skilful enchanter. And I will
give children to be their princes, and [2]babes shall rule over
5 them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by
another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall
behave himself proudly against the [3]ancient, and the base
6 against the honourable. When a man shall take hold of his
brother in the house of his father, *saying*, Thou hast
clothing, be thou our [4]ruler, and let this ruin be under thy

[1] Or, *charmer* [2] Or, *with childishness shalt they rule over them*
[3] Or, *elder* [4] Or, *judge*

cunning artificer] lit. "skilled in arts." It is disputed whether the arts in question are mechanical or magical; hence the alternative "charmer" in marg. The list is an amazing revelation of the place occupied by the lower forms of divination in public life as late as the age of Isaiah.

4. The supreme power passing into the hands of weaklings, a Reign of Terror ensues among the people. The sudden change of speaker is very striking.

and babes...] Rather, **and Outrage shall rule over them.** The word rendered "babes" is really an abstract noun, occurring again only in ch. lxvi. 4 (E.V. "delusions"). It is derived from a verb meaning "to outrage" or "to insult" (see Exod. x. 2; Jud. xix. 25; 1 Sam. xxxi. 4; Jer. xxxviii. 19; Num. xxii. 29), and seems here to denote those personal affronts and outrages which invariably accompany social confusions. The rendering "caprice," preferred by many, does not suit lxvi. 4. Some take the word as adverbial acc. (see marg. "with childishness shall they rule"), others think the abstract is used for the concrete ("capricious youths"). But the translation given is perhaps the most forcible. Outrage instead of Justice.

5. A general description of the state of anarchy; "the bonds of discipline and order are loosed, all authority disappears" (Dillmann).

6, 7. Frantic but unsuccessful efforts will be made to induce some one to undertake the task of maintaining order. *v.* 6 is the protasis, *v.* 7 the apodosis. Render: **When one man lays hold of another in his father's house: "Thou hast a cloak, thou shalt be a ruler for us,"** etc. Or: **When...another in whose father's house is a cloak: "Come, thou shalt be...."** The ambiguity lies in the word לכה, which may mean either "to thee" or "come." It is the election of a local justice (*kâdî* ch. i. 10), not of a king or dictator, which is described; "not an isolated, but a frequently observed circumstance" (Cheyne). The choice of the people falls on a landed proprietor who has been fortunate enough to retain his ancestral estate (his "father's house"), and whose outer garment is a sufficient badge of respectability. Some think, however, that "cloak" (*lôgu*) is a symbol of eligibility to civic office. On *ruler* see i. 10.

hand: in that day shall he lift up *his voice*, saying, I will not 7
be [1]an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor
clothing: ye shall not make me ruler of the people. For 8
Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their
tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke
the eyes of his glory. [2]The shew of their countenance doth 9
witness against them: and they declare their sin as Sodom,
they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have
[3]rewarded evil unto themselves. Say ye of the righteous, 10

[1] Heb. *a binder up.* [2] Or, *Their respecting of persons doth &c.*
[3] Or, *done*

7. *lift up* his voice] (as xlii. 2, 11), **protest.**

healer] lit. "binder-up" (of the wounds of the state), see i. 6; cf. xxx. 26; Hos. vi. 1.

in my house...clothing] "I am as poor as any of you."

8. 9. The ruin so vividly depicted is to the prophet's mind as certain as if it had been already accomplished, because the moral condition of the country, and especially of its present rulers, is one that Jehovah cannot tolerate. The perfects in *v.* 8 are those of prophetic certainty.

8. *Jerusalem is ruined*] lit. "has stumbled." A reference to the "ruin," *v.* 6.

their tongue and their doings] In word and deed they defy Jehovah and *provoke the eyes of his glory*. Cf. Hab. i. 13, "of too pure eyes to behold evil."

9. *The shew of their countenance*] The safest translation is that of marg., **Their respecting of persons**, i.e. their partiality in judgement. The familiar phrase "to respect persons" (see Deut. i. 17, &c.) appears here in the nominal form, the usual infinitive being replaced by a verbal noun. It is not an objection to this view that such a charge only applies to a particular class. The prophet deals with the nation throughout as a political unity, and he knows that the whole people must suffer for the sins of the rulers.

they declare...hide it not] or, **they declare their sin, like Sodom, undisguisedly.** On the construction see Davidson, *Synt.* § 41, R. 3.

Woe unto their soul...] or, **Woe to themselves for they have done themselves evil.** The injustice they have done to others witnesses against them and recoils on their own heads.

10. 11. The exclamation at the end of *v.* 9 leads to a statement of the universal law of divine retribution. The verses are probably interpolated, even Dillmann admitting that they fit but loosely into the context.

10. *Say ye of the righteous*] With a slight change in the consonantal text (אִשְׁרֵי for אִמְרוּ) we may read **Happy is the righteous! for it is well [with him].** The Heb. would then present an exact parallel to the beginning of the next verse.

that *it shall be* well *with him*: for they shall eat the fruit of
11 their doings. Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be* ill *with*
12 *him*: for the [1]reward of his hands shall be [2]given him. As
for my people, children are their oppressors, and women
rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause
13 thee to err, and [3]destroy the way of thy paths. The LORD
standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the [4]peoples.
14 The LORD will enter into judgement with the elders of his
people, and the princes thereof: It is ye that have eaten

[1] Or, *doing* [2] Heb. *done to him.* [3] Heb. *swallow up.* [4] Or, *people*

12. The threat of *v.* 4 is already on the way to be fulfilled; the conditions of anarchy are present in the childish character of the reigning monarch, Ahaz. Cf. Eccl. x. 16. The prophet's pity for the nation breaks out in the repeated exclamation, "My people!"

children are their oppressors, &c.] Rather, **his taskmaster** (plural of eminence) **is a child and women rule over him** (i.e. the people): the queen-mother and women of the harem attain an undue and dangerous influence under such a régime. Some comm., following the LXX., point נֹגְשָׂיו for נֹגְשָׂיִם, and render "its taskmasters spoil it, and *usurers* rule over it" (see Gray). But this is less probable.

they which lead thee cause thee to err] **thy leaders are misleaders**, an expression found again in ix. 16. The word for "lead" is that used in i. 17, "set right."

destroy] **have swallowed up**; according to others: "have confused."

the way of thy paths] "the path on which thou goest." The meaning is that the landmarks of national righteousness have been effaced from the minds of the people by the conduct of its statesmen and guides.

13—15. A judgement scene, originally unconnected with what has gone before, but expressing in another form the same sympathy with the oppressed which appears in *v.* 12. Jehovah, at once accuser and judge, comes to vindicate the cause of the poor against their oppressors.

13. The verse reads: **Jehovah has stationed himself to plead, and is standing to judge peoples.** Instead of "peoples" LXX. reads "his people" (cf. Deut. xxxii. 36), which is greatly to be preferred, since there is nothing to indicate that a world-judgement is contemplated; and the word can hardly denote the separate tribes of Israel. If the Heb. text be retained, the idea must be that of a general assize, in which Israel is judged first.

14. Those immediately arraigned are the "elders and princes," the authorities responsible for the national welfare.

It is ye that have eaten up] Rather, **And you—ye have eaten up**,—depastured. The indignant remonstrance of Jehovah commences at this point. The image of the vineyard is fully explained in ch. v. 1—7. The point of the accusation here is that those who should have kept the vineyard from the intrusion of wild beasts have themselves devoured it.

up the vineyard: the spoil of the poor is in your houses:
what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face 15
of the poor? saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

Moreover the LORD said, Because the daughters of Zion 16
are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and
wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making
a tinkling with their feet: therefore the Lord will smite with 17
a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and
the LORD will lay bare their secret parts. In that day the 18
Lord will take away the bravery of their anklets, and the
[1]cauls, and the crescents; the pendants, and the [2]bracelets, 19

[1] Or, *networks* [2] Or, *chains*

the spoil...houses] the evidence of their sin.

15. The strongest metaphors are used to express the cruelty with which the poor are treated.

crush my people] Prov. xxii. 22. *grind the face of the* **afflicted**] as between two millstones, determined to wring the uttermost farthing from them. The expression does not occur elsewhere, but in its fierce energy it may be compared with Mic. iii. 2 and Am. ii. 7.

16—24. An oracle addressed to the women of Jerusalem. Like Amos (iv. 1—3) in Samaria, Isaiah sees in the luxury of these pampered ladies a measure of the extortions practised by their husbands (cf. also ch. xxxii. 9—12).

16, 17 are connected as protasis and apodosis.

16. *daughters of Zion*] the fashionable aristocratic quarter of Jerusalem. The "haughtiness" of the daughters of Zion is displayed in their gestures as they walk abroad. They **walk with outstretched neck, and ogling with their eyes; tripping along they go, and tinkling with their feet.** The reference in the last words is to the jingling sound of the anklets (*v.* 18) and the short chain uniting them (*v.* 20); the latter also produced the tripping gait mentioned in the previous clause.

17. *smite with a scab*] In Heb. a single verb formed from the noun found in Lev. xiii. 2, 6 ff. (the law of leprosy).

18—23. A long and obscure inventory of articles of feminine attire, occurring "in a profusion which it is difficult to represent" (Cheyne). It is reassuring to be reminded by Dillmann that all these things (21 in number) were not necessarily worn at one time. It should also be noted that many of the ornaments specified were used as charms, as is the case with Eastern ornaments to the present day.

18. *anklets*] cf. Prov. vii. 22, and see on *v.* 16, where the verb "tinkling" is a denominative from this word. *cauls*] is very nearly a correct equivalent of the word *shebîs* in late Heb., = a net-band. Comp. Dryden:

And in a golden caul the curls are bound.

crescents] moon-shaped ornaments (Jud. viii. 21, 26, R.V. "ornaments"), said to be still worn by Arab women.

20 and the mufflers; the headtires, and the ankle chains, and
21 the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the
22 rings, and the nose jewels; the festival robes, and the
23 mantles, and the shawls, and the satchels; the hand
mirrors, and the fine linen, and the turbans, and the veils.
24 And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet spices there
shall be rottenness; and instead of a girdle a rope: and
instead of well set hair baldness: and instead of a stomacher
25 a girding of sackcloth: branding instead of beauty. Thy
men shall fall by the sword, and thy [1]mighty in the war.
26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be
4 [2]desolate and sit upon the ground. And seven women

[1] Heb. *might.* [2] Or, *emptied*

19. The ear-drops (Jud. viii. 26, R.V. "collars") **and the arm-chains and the veils**—the last (the Arabian *sar't*) is in two parts, one thrown back over the head from above the eyes, the other hanging down over the face.

20. *the* **mitres** (Ex. xxxix. 28; Ez. xxiv. 17; Is. lxi. 3, 10) *and the* **foot-chains** (see on *v.* 16; others, "bracelets," as in 2 Sam. i. 10, a slightly different word), *and the sashes* (Jer. ii. 32) *and the* **scent-bottles** (lit. "houses of soul"—of doubtful meaning), *and the amulets.*

21. *rings*] **seal-rings**, worn on the finger: Gen. xli. 42; Est. iii. 12. *nose jewels*] Gen. xxiv. 47.

22. *festival robes*] (Zech. iii. 4). *shawls*] Ruth iii. 15. *satchels*] **purses** (2 Ki. v. 23).

23. *hand mirrors*] See on "tablet" in viii. 1. More probably an article of clothing. *fine linen*] probably for underwear (Jud. xiv. 12 f.; Prov. xxxi. 24). *turbans*] as lxii. 3; Zech. iii. 5; Job xxix. 14. *veils*] or **overalls** (Cant. v. 7).

24. A description of the degradation of the high-born women of Jerusalem, reduced to beggary and slavery. The verse would appear to connect better with *v.* 17 than with 18—23.

sweet spices] lit. "balsam." *rottenness*] see *v.* 17.

well set hair] **artificial curls** (Cheyne), lit. "turner's work."

baldness] the result of disease, *v.* 17, or, possibly, a sign of mourning.

a stomacher] an obscure word; perhaps "fine dress."

branding] the symbol of slavery.

25 iv. 1. A poetic personification of Jerusalem, the mother city, mourning the loss of her sons and defenders, a separate fragment.

25. The words for "men" and "mighty" (lit. "might") are poetical terms.

26. *her gates*] (xiii. 2) the places of rendezvous in Eastern cities. *lament and mourn*] because they are now deserted. Cf. Lam. i. 4; Jer. xiv. 2.

and she, **emptied**, *shall sit upon the ground*] Cf. ch. xlvii. 1; Lam. ii. 10; Job ii. 13.

shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name; take thou away our reproach.

IV. 1. "A companion picture to iii. 6...the male population are in search of a ruler; the women in search of a husband" (Weir, quoted by Cheyne), —an interesting but misleading fancy! The poem has nothing to do with the scene of anarchy which is the burden of iii. 1–12.

let us be called...] **let thy name be named over us.** The wife bore the husband's name, but only, it would seem, in such designations as "Sarai, Abram's wife," Gen. xvi. 1, &c.

take...reproach] The disgrace of being unmarried is meant (Jud. xi. 37 f.).

Grotius cites a touching parallel from Lucan (*Pharsal.* II. 342):—

da tantum nomen inane
Connubii: liceat tumulo scripsisse, Catonis
Marcia.

2–6. THE FINAL STATE OF ZION AND THE REDEEMED ISRAEL.

Beyond the great judgement there is revealed to the prophet a vision of the ideal religious community, blessed with an exuberant supernatural fertility imparted to the soil (*vv.* 2), purified from sin (*vv.* 3, 4), and overshadowed by the protecting presence of Jehovah (*vv.* 5, 6). It is a picture of the glorious Messianic age which immediately follows the day of the Lord. Those who inherit its glories are the survivors of the catastrophe (*vv.* 2, 3). The section has no definite historical background, and formed no part of Isaiah's spoken message in the time of Ahaz. The verses have only a literary connexion with the preceding oracles.

By some recent critics (Duhm, Cheyne, Marti, &c.) the passage is assigned to a later editor of Isaiah's prophecies, and even so cautious a scholar as Dillmann hesitates with regard to the last two verses. The objections are based chiefly on considerations of style, and on the alleged post-Exilic character of the ideas and the symbolism. It is true that some leading words (such as those rendered "branch," "create," "defence," "covert") do not occur elsewhere in genuine writings of Isaiah. The imagery also is of a more pronouncedly apocalyptic cast than we might expect from Isaiah, and the style, especially towards the end, seems somewhat laboured and cumbrous. But on the other hand the main ideas—the salvation of a remnant, purification through judgement, the regeneration of nature—can all be paralleled from Isaiah, and this fact must be allowed some weight in favour of his authorship.

2. The luxuriant vegetation of the Holy Land in the latter days will reflect glory on the inhabitants as a proof of Jehovah's signal favour—a frequent thought in Messianic prophecy: Am. ix. 13; Hos. ii. 21 f.; Is. xxx. 23; Jer. xxxi. 12; Ez. xxxiv. 26–30, xxxvi. 34 f.; Zech. ix. 16 f.; Mal. iii. 12; Joel iii. 18; and cf. Lev. xxvi. 3–5; Deut. xxviii. 3–5, 10–12. The verse has a close resemblance to ch. xxviii. 5.

2 In that day shall the [1]branch of the LORD be beautiful
and glorious, and the fruit of the [2]land shall be [3]excellent
3 and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And
it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he
that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even
every one that is written [4]among the living in Jerusalem:
4 when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the
daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of

[1] Or, *shoot* Or, *sprout* [2] Or, *earth*
[3] Or, *majestic* [4] Or, *unto life*

the branch of the LORD] better, **the growth of Jehovah**, that which Jehovah causes to grow. The word occurs in the same sense in Gen. xix. 25 (R.V. "that which grew") and Is. lxi. 11 ("bud"). It stands in parallelism with *the fruit of the land* (of Palestine) in the next clause, and both expressions are to be understood quite literally. The reference to a personal Messiah is thus excluded by the context; for few will be prepared to apply *both* expressions to Christ, the former to His divine sonship and the latter to His human birth (although this view is defended by Delitzsch on the analogy of Ez. xvii. 5). It is true that *afterwards* the Heb. word for "growth" (*ẓemaḥ*) came to be used as a title of the Messiah (Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12), but this usage rests on Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15, where the Messiah is described as a scion (*ẓemaḥ*) of the Davidic house. Observe that it is an entirely different word which is translated "Branch" in Is. xi. 1.

beautiful and glorious...excellent and comely] better, **for beauty and honour...for a pride and a glory.**

to the escaped *of Israel*] those who have been spared in the day of the Lord's anger. Cf. ch. x. 20, xxxvii. 31.

3. The character of the escaped remnant. They *shall be called holy*, ch. lx. 14, lxi. 6, lxii. 12. "Holiness" here includes the ideas of consecration to God, and inviolability (Jer. ii. 3), as well as of moral purity (*v.* 4).

written among the living] rather, **written for life** (see marg.), i.e. not any chance survivor, but those who are predestined to life (cf. Acts xiii. 48). The figure is derived from the burgess rolls in which the name of every qualified citizen was to be found (cf. Neh. vii. 64); hence comes the idea of the "book of life" containing the names of all the true people of God; Ex. xxxii. 32 f.; Ps. lxix. 28; Dan. xii. 1; Lk. x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5, xiii. 8, xx. 12, 15, xxiii. 19 (and cf. "bundle of life," 1 Sam. xxv. 29). The transition from the secular to the religious sense may be seen in Ez. xiii. 9.

4. If (once) Jehovah have washed, &c. Although the order is unusual, this verse may be taken as a conditional sentence depending on *v.* 3 (as in E.V.); but by most it is regarded as protasis to *v.* 5.

the daughters of Zion] The plural is scarcely intelligible apart from

Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the [1]spirit of judgement, and by the [1]spirit of burning. And the LORD will 5
create over [2]the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over
her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining
of a flaming fire by night: for over all the glory *shall be*
spread a canopy. And there shall be a pavilion for a 6
shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a refuge and
for a covert from storm and from rain.

[1] Or, *blast* [2] Or, *every dwelling place*

iii. 16, and was probably introduced because of the supposed connexion with that passage. We may either read the sing. (see on i. 8), or omit the word altogether.

blood (i.e. **bloodstains**) *of Jerusalem*] Cf. Jer. ii. 34; Ezek. xxii. 2 ff.

spirit of burning] better, **spirit of extermination** (as in vi. 13; 1 Ki. xxii. 46, &c.). The medium of the judgement is the "spirit," the divine energy, which is operative alike in the physical and in the moral sphere (cf. ch. xxxii. 15).

5, 6. The gracious presence of God becomes a visible fact to men's eyes, in the cloud of fire and smoke which overshadows and protects the new Jerusalem. The symbolism is drawn from the story of the Exodus and the tabernacle in the desert (Ex. xiii. 21 f., xl. 34—38, &c.).

5. *And* (or **Then**) *the LORD will create*] LXX. reads "And he will come and [there] will be" (ובא והיה for וברא יהוה), which is adopted by several comm. as at least partly correct.

over the whole (*divine*) *habitation of Mount Zion*] Marg. "every dwelling place." The word is never used of *human* dwellings. It might be translated, "foundation"; in either case it is equivalent to "sanctuary."

her assemblies] **convocations**, worshipping assemblies, as in i. 13.

a cloud...night] better (disregarding the accents), **a cloud by day and smoke with the shining of a flaming fire by night.**

for over all the glory...canopy] A perplexing clause. A literal translation would be: **for over every glory (should be) a canopy.** So rendered, the words express a general principle of ceremonial propriety: wherever there is "a glory" (as e.g. royal majesty), it must be provided with a suitable canopy. The clause may be a marginal gloss suggested to a reader by the first part of the verse. The word for "canopy" occurs only in Ps. xix. 5; Joel ii. 16 in the sense of "nuptial pavilion" (see Robertson Smith, *Marriage and Kinship in Early Arabia*, pp. 168 f.). In post-biblical Hebrew it means (as here) "canopy" in general.

6. *a pavilion*] **a booth**; cf. Ps. xviii. 11.

in the day-time] is omitted by the LXX.

for a refuge...from storm and from rain] The mention of these "lesser inconveniences" reads like an anticlimax. It is certainly difficult to think that Isaiah would have written so weak a conclusion to an important oracle. The passage may be fragmentary; or the original prophecy may end at the colon in *v.* 5.

5 Let me sing [1]for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in

[1] Or, *of*

Ch. V.

The chapter consists of three parts:—

i. *vv.* 1—7. The ingratitude of Israel and its approaching rejection by Jehovah are set forth under the veil of a homely parable.

ii. *vv.* 8—24. A series of six "Woes" directed against the prevalent vices and injustice of the upper classes and leaders of the state. These would form a fitting sequel to *vv.* 1—7; but certain internal differences of structure and rhythm rather suggest that the oracles were uttered at various times, and afterwards strung together because of the opening catchword.

iii. *vv.* 25—30. Isaiah's first description of the Assyrian invaders, the agents of Jehovah's chastisement, already appearing on the horizon of the prophet's vision. There are strong reasons for thinking that these verses formed originally the peroration of a different prophecy, entirely independent of *vv.* 1—24 (see below).

By the consent of nearly all critics, i. and ii. belong to the first period of Isaiah's career, but beyond this it is impossible to speak definitely. A comparison with ch. ii., iii., however, suggests that the prophet has now acquired a more intimate knowledge of the state of society in Jerusalem, and is able to lay a firmer hand on the evils of his time. We shall probably not go far wrong if we assign the prophecy to a slightly later date than the preceding chapters.

1—7. The Parable of the Vineyard and its Application.

One of the finest exhibitions of rhetorical skill and power which the book contains. The prophet appears in the guise of a minstrel at some public celebration, probably the great autumn festival, and proceeds to recite the unfortunate experience of a Friend of his with his vineyard. We may surmise (with Schmidt) that listening to love-songs in which the imagery of the vineyard formed the leading motive (see Cant. viii. 11 f., iv. 16, v. 1, vi. 2 f., 11, &c.) was a favourite diversion on such occasions: the people would eagerly gather round to hear what new turn would be given to this well-worn theme. The simple story, told in light popular verse, disarms the suspicions of the crowd, and the singer, having secured their sympathy, demands a verdict on the course which a man might be expected to pursue with so refractory a vineyard as this (*v.* 3). The answer was so obvious that the people, like our Lord's hearers on a similar occasion (Matt. xxi. 41), had practically assented to their own condemnation before they clearly perceived the drift of the discourse. But from this point onwards the parable becomes more and more transparent, till at last the prophet throws off all disguise and drives home the lesson of the whole in the crashing lines of *v.* 7.

[1]a very fruitful hill: and he [2]made a trench about it, and 2
gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the
choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also
hewed out a [3]winepress therein: and he looked that it

[1] Heb. *a horn, the son of oil.* [2] Or, *digged it* [3] Or, *winefat*

1 a contains the preamble to the poem. The exact idea is difficult to determine. We may render:

I would sing of my Beloved,
My love-song about his vineyard.

The word דוֹד (R.V. "beloved") means in the sing. "lover" or "loved one" (Cant. *passim*), but in the plur. "love" in the abstract: hence pointing שִׁירַת דּוֹדִי we translate: "my song of love" (cf. Ps. xlv. title; and see Introd. Note above). The term יָדִיד ("wellbeloved") always in the sing. denotes the object of (Jehovah's) affection (= "darling": Deut. xxxiii. 12; Ps. lx. 5 [= cviii. 6], cxxvii. 2; Jer. xi. 15). Here it refers parabolically to Jehovah Himself: compare the first line of the poem with *v.* 7. Isaiah does not mean as yet to excite curiosity as to who the "Beloved" is; only he cannot, even in a parable, divest himself of the consciousness that he represents the interests of Another.

1 b, 2, the first stanza (eight lines).

A vineyard had my Beloved
On a fertile hill-top.

a very fruitful hill] lit. "a horn, the son of fatness." "Apertos Bacchus amat colles" (Virg. *Georg.* II. 113). The land of Palestine is no doubt meant, but it is a mistake to allegorise the details of the imagery. This use of the word "horn" for "hill" is not found elsewhere in the O.T., but has many parallels in Arabic as well as other languages (cf. "Schreckhorn," &c.). It is chosen here for the sake of the assonance with the word for "vineyard."

2. (Six lines.) The situation was all that could be desired; and *labour* had not been spared. Note the resemblances in Matt. xxi. 33 ff.; Mk. xii. 1 ff. *made a trench about it*] **digged it** (marg.). The word is not found elsewhere in O.T., but the meaning is certain from later Heb. and Arab.: "turn over the ground." *gathered out the stones thereof*] In Heb. a single word: lit. "stoned it" (ch. lxii. 10). The phrase "stone a field," for "clear it of stones," is said to be common in some parts of England. *the choicest vine*] A technical name (collective) for the finest sort of grapes grown in Syria. The word occurs again in Jer. ii. 21; the corresponding noun of unity (fem.) in Gen. xlix. 11. *built a tower*] for the watchers; not a mere hut, as in i. 8.

and also...winepress] **yea, and hewed out a winefat** (ὑπολήνιον, Mk. xii. 1). The *yeḳeb* is the receptacle (here cut out of the rock) into which the juice flows from the winepress (*gath*). (Cf. Joel iii. 13; Prov. iii. 10;

should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.
3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
4 judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth
5 grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be [1]eaten up; I will break down
6 the fence thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds

[1] Or, *burnt*

Neh. xiii. 15, &c.) The emphasis on this clause calls attention to the owner's confident expectation of a return for his outlay.

brought forth wild grapes] Cf. Jer. ii. 21.

3, 4. Second stanza (eight lines). The beginning of a new stanza is marked by the "And now," as in *v.* 5.

betwixt me and my vineyard] The singer here identifies himself with the "Beloved," the real owner of the vineyard. The change of person is the first hint of a deeper meaning under the words of the song.

4. (Four lines.) The case for the owner of the vineyard.

What could have been done] lit. **What more is there to do** (cf. 2 Ki. iv. 13).

wherefore, when I looked...wild grapes] Lit. **why did I look that it should...and it brought forth wild grapes.** The co-ordination of clauses assimilates the ending of the second stanza to that of the first. (For other examples of the same order, see Davidson, *Synt.* § 126, R. 4.)

5, 6. Third stanza (eight lines). The hearers are silent, and the prophet proceeds to pass sentence on the vineyard.

And now, let me tell you, I pray,
What I am about to do to my vineyard.

The construction in the second line is the *fut. instans*; the owner's mind is finally made up.

5. *I will take away...break down*] better simply, **Remove...Break down** –absolute infs. in apposition to "what." The vineyard is provided both with a **hedge** (of thorns) and a **wall** (of stone).

6. *lay it waste*] or perhaps **make an end of it.** The word is thought to be connected with that rendered "desolate" in ch. vii. 19,—better "precipitous," "cut off," hence (as here) "made an end of."

there shall come up...thorns] The Heb. is more forcible: **it shall go up in thorns and thistles.** "Thorns and thistles," a phrase peculiar to the book of Isaiah: vii. 23, 24, 25, ix. 18, x. 17, xxvii. 4.

In the last line the whole drift of the parable is revealed: He who can *command the clouds* must be no other than Jehovah Himself.

that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the 7
LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah
[1]his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgement, but
behold [2]oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.
Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to 8

[1] Heb. *the plant of his delight.* [2] Or, *shedding of blood*

7. Fourth stanza (four lines). The formal application of the parable, emphasising two facts: (1) Jehovah's vineyard is the *house of Israel*, but especially the *men of Judah*, **the plant of his delight** (marg.); (2) the "wild grapes" it produces are the frightful oppressions and perversion of justice which are perpetrated in its midst. The underlying thought is that Jehovah's signal care and goodness ought to have resulted in a national life corresponding to His moral character—a fundamental truth of the prophetic theology.

He looked for judgment (*mishpāṭ*), **but behold bloodshed** (*mispāḥ*); **For righteousness** (*ṣᵉdhāḳāh*), **but behold a cry!** (*ṣᵉʿāḳāh*).

These powerful assonances, which cannot be reproduced in English, are evidently designed to clinch the moral of the parable in the memories of the hearers. The "cry" is that of the oppressed, cf. Job xix. 7.

The idea of Israel as the Lord's vineyard has already met us in iii. 14, but is here first elaborated in its full significance. If it originated with Isaiah, the prophetic theology owed to him a conception frequently recurring (see xxvii. 2 ff.; Jer. ii. 21, xii. 10 f.; Ps. lxxx. 8 ff.; Matt. xx. 1 ff., xxi. 33 ff. and parallels), and embodying some of the most fundamental positions of the religion of revelation. That true religion is not a plant that grows wild among men, but is a divine culture in human history; that from the people of his choice the Lord expects the fruit of righteousness; that the divine husbandry is thwarted by some natural tendency to degeneration in the people, and by the infidelity of their civil and spiritual leaders; that judgement—the withdrawal of protection and gracious influences—is the inevitable issue of such apostasy:—these are the main truths expressed by the image as conceived in the mind of Isaiah, and truths which are developed with remarkable incisiveness in the teaching of our Lord.

8—24. DENUNCIATION OF THE SOCIAL EVILS WHICH CALL DOWN GOD'S JUDGEMENT ON THE NATION.

The indictment contains six counts (originally seven: see on *vv.* 14—17), each introduced by the word "Woe," addressed exclusively to the upper classes, although the punishment of their sin falls on the nation as a whole. The prophet sets before us a vivid picture of a debased aristocracy, in whom public virtue has been eaten out by avarice and sensuality; and he traces with remarkable insight the effect of these sins in the religious insensibility and perversion of the moral sentiments which characterised the nobles of Judah at this time.

field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone
9 in the midst of the land! In mine ears *saith* the LORD of
hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great
10 and fair, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall
yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield *but* an
ephah.
11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that

8—10. The first woe, against the absorption of small properties by the wealthy landowners. Cruel evictions, by which the smaller peasant proprietors lost not only their homes but the rights of citizenship, were common in the age of Isaiah, both in Judah and Israel. Cf. Mic. ii. 2, 9; Am. ii. 6 f. "The old Israelite state was so entirely based on the participation of every freeman in the common soil, and so little recognised the mere possession of capital, that men were in danger of losing civil rights along with house and fields, and becoming mere hirelings or even slaves" (Duhm). An instance of the tenacity with which the Hebrew yeoman clung to his land may be seen in 1 Kings xxi. For legal checks to this evil, see Lev. xxv. 8 ff.; Num. xxvii. 1—11, xxxvi.; Deut. xxvii. 17.

8. *and ye be made...land*] Some explain: "be established in sole possession of full civic rights"; see the last note.

9, 10. The divine judgement on this evil. Cf. Am. v. 11.

9. *In mine ears* saith *the LORD of hosts*] The verb is to be supplied as in xxii. 14: **In my ears (hath revealed himself) Jehovah**.... Others, partly guided by the LXX., would supply "hath sworn." In either case it is a true prophetic "audition"; the words which follow seem actually to sound in his ears. The great houses shall be uninhabited, because—

10. The land shall be smitten with the curse of barrenness; Jehovah's remedy for land-grabbing.

ten acres] lit. **ten yoke**; a yoke of land being

"As much as two stout oxen
Could plough from morn till night."

Comp. Plin. *H. N.*, XVIII. 6, 8.

one bath] (of wine),—about 8 gallons.

a homer of seed...ephah] The *ephah* is a dry measure of the same capacity as the *bath*; the *homer* is ten *ephahs* (Ez. xlv. 11).

11—13. The second woe, against dissipation and the spiritual blindness which accompanies it. Cf. xxviii. 1, 7 ff.

11. *rise up early*] Drinking in the morning was considered disreputable by the Jews (Eccl. x. 16 f.; Acts ii. 15) and Romans; but not, apparently, by the Arabs (Gesenius). The word for *strong drink* seems to be a general name for various kinds of alcoholic liquors obtained from dates, honey, raisins, barley, &c.

they may follow strong drink ; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them ! And the harp and the lute, the 12
tabret and the pipe, and wine, are *in* their feasts : but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither have they considered the operation of his hands. Therefore my people 13
are gone into captivity, for lack of knowledge : and [1]their honourable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst. Therefore [2]hell hath enlarged her 14

[1] Heb. *their glory are men of famine.*
[2] Or, *the grave* Heb. *Sheol.* See Gen. xxxvii. 35.

that tarry...inflame them] rather, **that sit late into the night, wine inflaming them.**

12. Cf. Am. vi. 5, 6. *And the harp...feasts*] better, **And guitar and harp, tambourine and flute, and wine constitute their banquet**; as if to drown the voice of conscience and destroy the sense of God's presence and working in their midst.

the work of the LORD...the operation of his hands] i.e. the crowning work of judgement which He is about to execute, and of which there were many ominous warnings for those who could discern the signs of the times: "opus aliquod illustre futurum...quod Deus hoc ipso tempore iam moliebatur" (Vitr.). Cf. *v.* 19, ch. x. 12, xxviii. 21; Ps. xxviii. 5. A similar thought is expressed in Am. vi. 6, where the luxurious nobles are charged with insensibility to the "ruin of Joseph."

13. Therefore (because its leaders are so blind) **my people goeth into captivity** (proph. perf.). This is the only explicit mention of exile in Isaiah. Cf. again Am. vi. 7. The next words may be rendered either *for lack of knowledge* (R.V.) or **without knowing it** "unawares" (Cheyne). The former gives the better sense (cf. Hos. iv. 6).

their honourable men...their multitude] lit. "its glory"..."its tumult." The contrast, however, is rightly indicated by R.V.—the *noblesse* over against the populace (see 2 Sam. vi. 19). *famished*] Heb. "men of hunger." But the word for "men" is poetic (iii. 25) and never found in such phrases as this. The ancient versions, with a different vocalisation, read "dead with hunger," which is obviously too strong. Most commentators now follow Ewald and Hitzig, and alter the text in accordance with Deut. xxxii. 24 (R.V. "wasted"), reading "sucked out (exhausted) with hunger." This involves the change of a single letter, and yields a suitable parallelism to "dried up with thirst."

14—17. A threatening, in a sublime image, of the sudden destruction of Jerusalem. The recurrence of "Therefore," and the unexplained change from masc. to fem. in the pronouns, make it extremely probable that a verse introducing a third "Woe" has been omitted.

14. *hell hath enlarged her desire*] better, **Sheol hath enlarged her appetite** (Hab. ii. 5). Sheol, the Underworld, the realm of the dead (like the Greek Hades), is here, as elsewhere, conceived as a devouring

desire, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their [1]pomp, and he that
15 rejoiceth among them, descend *into it*. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes
16 of the lofty are humbled: but the LORD of hosts is exalted in judgement, and God the Holy One is sanctified in
17 righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall [2]wanderers eat.

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
19 and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make

[1] Or, *tumult* [2] Or, *strangers*

insatiable monster; cf. Hos. xiii. 14; Jon. ii. 2; Cant. viii. 6; Prov. i. 12, xxx. 16.

and **her** *glory...descend* into it] Render (nearly as Cheyne) **and down goes her** (Jerusalem's) **pomp, and her tumult and her uproar and (all) that is (so) jubilant in her.**

15, 16. A reminiscence of the refrain in ch. ii. 9, 11, 17; but with significant modifications. These verses interrupt the connexion of *v.* 17 with *v.* 14, and are clearly interpolated.

16. *God the Holy One...*] **the Holy God sanctifies Himself through righteousness.** God "sanctifies Himself," i.e. compels the recognition of His divinity, by the righteous judgements in which He reveals His true nature as the Holy One of Israel (cf. xxix. 23).

17. The obverse of the picture in *v.* 14. The city, with all its tumult and gaiety, has vanished into the underworld, and now flocks are seen grazing on its site,—an image of awful desolation rather than of "idyllic peace." Comp. xxxii. 14.

Then shall the lambs... pasture] **And lambs shall graze**, &c.

wanderers] **sojourners**—can hardly mean "nomadic shepherds." The reading of the LXX. (ἄρνες = lambs) points to a slight change in the text (גרים = "kids" for גרים) and is to be preferred.

18, 19. The fourth woe, against the mocking scepticism which leads men to harden themselves in sin. The men addressed do not believe in the prophet's threats of a day of retribution, yet all the while they are unconsciously doing their utmost to bring about their fulfilment.

18. The figure seems to express two ideas: (1) the determination with which these men set themselves to work iniquity, and (2) the inevitable connexion between sin and judgement. The idea of punishment is included in the words *iniquity* (or "guilt") and *sin*.

19. An impious challenge to Jehovah to make good His words spoken through the prophet. This defiant unbelief seems to have been the reigning spirit in the political circles of Isaiah's time; xxviii. 14 f., 22; cf. Jer. v. 12, xvii. 15.

speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it: and let
the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come,
that we may know it!

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that 20
put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put
bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and 21
prudent in their own sight!

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men 22
of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked 23
for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous
from him! Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the 24
stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so
their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go

20. The fifth woe, against those who confuse moral distinctions. Amongst the "wise men" of the time (Prov. xxv. 1) there may have been a class of sophists, who employed their subtlety in making out a case for abuses condemned by the unsophisticated moral sense.

21. The sixth woe, against the self satisfied astuteness of the politicians. That the prophet has the statesmen in his eye is probable from such passages as xxviii. 9 f., xxix. 14 f., xxx. 1, 10 f., xxxi. 1 f.

22, 23. The seventh woe, against dissolute and corrupt judges. In *vv.* 11 f. drunkenness was denounced as destructive of all serious thought; here it is spoken of as the parent of injustice on the bench, as in Prov. xxxi. 4 f.

22. *them that are mighty*] **heroes.**

to mingle strong drink] This was a delicate operation, almost a fine art, demanding a refined taste and much experience (Prov. xxiii. 30). The phrase does not mean to dilute with water, which was common among Greeks and Romans, but rather to enhance by the addition of aromatic herbs (cf. "spiced wine" in Cant. viii. 2).

23. These valiant drinkers are weak enough in their official capacity; they acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent. *justify the wicked*] "wicked" and "righteous" are here used in their forensic sense: "he who is in the wrong" and "he who is in the right" (cf. Ex. ix. 27). So "take away the righteousness" means "declare guilty"—the opposite of "justify."

24. The conclusion. *Therefore...flame*] The similes are taken from two common customs, the burning of the stubble in the fields, and the use of dry grass for fuel. The comparison is completed in a different figure.

root...blossom] The expression is found on a Phœnician sarcophagus (Eshmunazar), "let him not have root below or fruit above"; and frequently in the O.T., Is. xiv. 29, xxxvii. 31; Am. ii. 9; Hos. ix. 16; Mal. iv. 1.

up as dust: because they have rejected the [1]law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his

[1] Or, *teaching*

the law of the LORD of hosts] See on i. 10. The last clause is a summary description of the sins of the nation; the source from which they all spring is the rejection of the prophetic message.

despised] Cf. i. 4.

25—30. THE FINAL JUDGEMENT ON NORTHERN ISRAEL.

Although the passage might be explained as the continuation of *v.* 24, it gains immensely in significance when read as the final strophe of the prophecy in ch. ix. 8—21, a position to which several considerations lead us to assign it. (1) The latter part of *v.* 25 occurs *as a refrain* in ix. 12, 17, 21 (also x. 4). It is found nowhere else, and its isolated occurrence in v. 25 would greatly weaken the force of *v.* 24. (2) After reading ix. 21, we feel that the last word has not been spoken: the hand is still outstretched, we wait to hear of the final blow. (3) Even if x. 1—4 were a suitable sequel to ix. 8—21 (which it is not: see p. 90), the recurrence of the refrain in x. 4 still demands a satisfying conclusion; and this cannot be sought in x. 5 ff., where an entirely new subject is introduced. In any case the verses before us (26—29) supply the appropriate climax.—Thus far nearly all modern critics are in general agreed, though with reservations as to the first part of *v.* 25. Instead of treating it as an editorial link (Gray) or the end of a lost strophe (Dillmann and Duhm) we may rather regard it (with Staerk) as a misplaced fragment whose original position was between *vv.* 10 and 11 of ch. ix. The great recommendation of this transference is that the first two lines of v. 25 seem to anticipate the refrain, and would read most unnaturally after it had been several times repeated (ix. 12, 17, 21 [x. 4]). On the other hand it must be confessed that the suggestion adds to the difficulty already sufficiently great—of accounting for the present derangement of the text; besides removing the most tangible reason for linking on v. 26 ff. to ix. 21. (On another objection see p. 85.) Condamin's ingenious arrangement deserves mention: he regards *vv.* 24 f. as a stray strophe of ch. ix. (after ix. 17), and finds a place for *vv.* 26—30 in the middle of viii. 20.

25. *Therefore*] The Heb. word differs from that in *vv.* 13, 14, 24, and agrees with that in ix. 17. The opening sentences go back to the kindling of Jehovah's anger and the uplifting of His hand, which gives the keynote of the refrain. The tenses are perfects (or consec. impf.) usually taken as prophetic perf.; but this is scarcely natural. A past judgement is probably referred to (see on ix. 8 ff.). The language points clearly to an earthquake (*the hills did tremble*), perhaps the great earthquake of Isaiah's youth, which may have been felt with special severity in Samaria.

people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them, and the hills did tremble, and their carcases were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from 26
far, and will hiss for [1]them from the end of the earth: and, behold, [2]they shall come with speed swiftly: none shall be 27
weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: whose arrows are 28
sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: their 29
roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions:

[1] Heb. *him*. [2] Heb. *he*, and in the following verses.

their carcases were as **offal**, &c.] a very common figure (2 Ki. ix. 37; Jer. xvi. 4, xxv. 33; Zeph. i. 17; Ps. lxxxiii. 10).

For all this...] See on ch. ix. 12.

26–29. A powerful description of the advance of the invaders, who however remain unnamed. That the Assyrians are here alluded to is certain both from the explicit statements of later prophecies, and from the terms of the description itself. The picture is no doubt highly idealised (as was natural in a first sketch), but it is clear that some particular nation is meant, and we can have no hesitation in saying that the reference is to the most perfect military machine that then existed, the Assyrian army.

26. *And he will lift up an ensign*] i.e. a signal, set up on a hill (xiii. 2, xviii. 3, xxx. 17; cf. xi. 10, 12) as a point of rendezvous. (Mark the significant change to the future tense.) *the nations from far*] better, **a nation from afar**, exactly as in Jer. v. 15 (cf. Am. vi. 14). The singular is demanded by what follows, and is obtained by removing the last letter of one word to the beginning of the next.

hiss] **whistle**, as in ch. vii. 18; Zech. x. 8. The image is that of a bee-keeper alluring the swarm.

with speed swiftly] because it is Jehovah who calls. "They" should be "he," to the end of the chapter, the nation being individualised.

27. Their accoutrement is perfect down to the smallest detail.

28. *bows bent*] which was done only for immediate action. **his horses' hoofs...flint**] Therefore he will not shrink from riding them on the rocky soil of Palestine, which was unfavourable to the use of horses (Am. vi. 12). Similar allusions are frequent in ancient literature (κρατερώνυχες ἵπποι), the shoeing of horses being unknown in antiquity. The bows and arrows, cavalry and chariots, are all characteristic of the Assyrians (xxi. 15, xxii. 6 f., xxxvi. 8, xxxvii. 33).

29. *Their roaring...*] Or, **he has a roar like that of a lioness, he**

yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it
30 away safe, and there shall be none to deliver. And they shall roar [1]against them in that day like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, [2]behold darkness *and* distress, and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof.

[1] Or, *over*

[2] According to the Massoretic text, *behold darkness: distress and light; it is dark &c.*

roars like young lions and growls seizing the prey, &c. Two words are here used of the lion's roar, the first (*shĕāgāh. yish'ag*) is perhaps that uttered as he searches for prey, the second (*yinhōm*) the low growl with which he springs on his victim.

30. Apparently an image of the land in the throes of the invasion. The verse, which presents many difficulties, may read somewhat as follows: **And he shall growl over him in that day like the growling of the sea, and if one look to the earth, behold darkness of distress [and the light is dark] in its clouds.** The text is probably in some disorder. The words in brackets are wanting in the LXX. The first clause is generally interpreted of the growl of the invader over the prostrate land; some, however, understand it of the voice of Jehovah (the thunder) moving overhead and directing the attack. The latter part of the verse has a general resemblance to viii. 22; the words "look to the earth" seem to require some such antithesis as "look up" in viii. 21.

in the clouds thereof] The word is not elsewhere used and is of uncertain meaning.

Ch. VI.

Isaiah's Inaugural Vision.

It is now universally acknowledged that this chapter records Isaiah's initiation into the office of a prophet. The opinion of many older commentators that it represents a renewal or recovery of the prophetic consciousness after several years of public activity, was based on the erroneous assumption that the order of the book is in the main chronological and that the previous chapters contain prophecies from the reign of Uzziah (see also on *v.* 5, below). Everything in the narrative itself suggests that it is an inaugural vision, a record of the experience by which Isaiah was made a prophet. The consciousness of standing in a peculiar relation to God, of personal reconciliation to Him, of being in His council, and bearing a definite commission straight from Himself, dates from the moment when in an ecstasy he "saw the Lord." The vision is undoubtedly an actual experience, not the mere embodiment of an idea; it occurred in the death-year of Uzziah, as the prophet, looking back after some lapse of time, distinctly recalls. Then Isaiah saw God, not indeed with his bodily eyes, but in a prophetic trance,

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting 6

in which the ordinary operations of the mind were suspended and spiritual realities assumed concrete and visible forms. That the publication of the vision belongs to a more advanced stage of the prophet's ministry seems implied by the note of time in *v.* 1, and is probable on other grounds. Its place in the book is best explained by the supposition that it was written as the prologue to a short collection of oracles (vii.—ix. 7, see Introd. p. lxxviii) giving a summary of Isaiah's teaching in the early part of the reign of Ahaz. But we have no right to imagine that the prophet, from his subsequent experience, read into his original commission elements which it did not convey to his mind at the time. To suppose that he could not have carried on his work under the depressing conviction (expressed in *vv.* 9—13) that he would only harden the people in unbelief is to mistake the prophet's attitude to his work. If there were any force in the argument, it would prove too much, for it would be necessary to suppose that the chapter was written after Isaiah's life-work was over. But Isaiah, like his predecessors Amos and Hosea and his successors Jeremiah and Ezekiel, spoke the word of God under an inward constraint, and his writings contain no sign that he ever cherished any expectations of success beyond what the vision allows.

The chapter stands unrivalled in the Old Testament both for grandeur of conception and the majestic simplicity of its style. The narrative is in prose: the speeches are rhythmical. There are strictly no divisions, but for convenience of exposition we may distinguish three stages in the process of initiation:—

i. *vv.* 1—4. The vision of Jehovah in His glory, and the splendours of His court.

ii. *vv.* 5—8. The impression produced by this sight on the mind of the prophet: at first a crushing sense of imperfection and guilt, which is transformed by a symbolic act denoting forgiveness into glad self-surrender to the service of the King.

iii. *vv.* 9—13. His commission to declare the word of God to the people, with an announcement of its two-fold effect: (1) to increase the spiritual insensibility of the mass of the nation (*vv.* 9, 10), and (2) to lay waste the land by a succession of exterminating judgements, which shall leave only a remnant to form the nucleus of the future people of God (11—13).

1—4. Jehovah appears to the prophet in human form, and as a King, seated on a throne, surrounded by ministering servants who sing His praise (cf. 1 Ki. xxii. 19 ff.). The scene is the Temple (*v.* 1), where Isaiah probably was when the vision occurred. There is no occasion to suppose that a "heavenly palace" (as Ps. xi. 4, xviii. 6, xxix. 9; Mic. i. 2) is meant. What the prophet sees is the spiritual reality of which the Temple was a symbol, Jehovah's presence as King in the midst of His people. Cf. ch. viii. 18.

1. *In the year that king Uzziah died*] i.e. about 740 B.C.; see

upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his [1]train filled the
2 temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six

[1] Or, *skirts*

Chronological Note, pp. lxxx ff. Whether the event happened before or after the king's death cannot be determined. It lends an additional interest to the vision if we adopt the latter view, and regard this as the divine answer to the anxious foreboding thoughts which naturally arose in a susceptible mind at the death of a strong and successful ruler. The earthly king has passed away, and now Isaiah sees the true King in His glory.

I saw the Lord] Many codices read here *Yahwe*, which is perhaps to be preferred to the *Adonai* of the received text. Since the latter was always substituted for the former in reading, the names would readily be confused in copying a MS. to dictation. The words **high and lofty** apply to the throne, not to Jehovah Himself, as in ch. lvii. 15.

his train filled the temple] The skirts of His vesture fill the whole space, and on these alone, not on the person of Jehovah, Isaiah allows his eyes to rest.

2. *Above him...seraphim*] better, **Seraphim were standing over Him**, i.e. in the attitude of service. One standing in the presence of another who is seated is always said to be *over* him, whatever their mutual relations may be: 1 Ki. xxii. 19; Gen. xviii. 2, 8; Ex. xviii. 13, &c. The Seraphim (probably "fiery beings") are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture as angelic beings. Their symbolic function in this vision is in the main obvious. They are the attendants of Jehovah's court or the ministers of the invisible sanctuary—perhaps guardians of the threshold, whose office was to repel intruders or (as in *v.* 6) to admit the initiated to the presence of deity; they reflect the glory of God, and by their presence and actions suggest new and fuller conceptions of His ineffable majesty. The basis of the symbol is obscure. The serpents with which the Israelites were plagued in the desert are called Seraphim (sing. *Sarâph*: Num. xxi. 6—9; Deut. viii. 15), and some connexion between the two uses of the word is probable. An intermediate link would be supplied by the "flying Saraph" of ch. xiv. 29, xxx. 6,—apparently an allusion to a widely diffused mythological notion; see Herodotus II. 75 on the winged serpents of Arabia. It is also worthy of notice that the brazen Saraph (Num. xxi. 8) made by Moses must have been a conspicuous object in the temple at the time of Isaiah's call (2 Ki. xviii. 4). Other analogies may be found in the Egyptian *Sefr* or *Serf*, a winged griffin guarding tombs, &c.; and the winged composite figures at the entrance of Assyrian temples and palaces. Different elements, in fact, seem to be combined in the conception of the Saraph; but whether it had been already incorporated in the religion of Israel, or whether Isaiah was the first who lifted it into the sphere of spiritual ideas, it is quite impossible to say. Isaiah's Seraphim are winged creatures, but certainly not serpentine

wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one 3
cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: [1]the whole earth is full of his glory.
And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the 4
voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with

[1] Heb. *the fulness of the whole earth is his glory.*

in form, probably human, or at least partly human, like the Cherubim (Ez. i. 5—14).

with twain he covered his face...] The sense is well expressed by the Targum: "With two he covered his face *that he might not see*; and with two he covered his body *that he might not be seen*."

3. *And one* **kept crying** *unto another*] (freq. impf.) Cf. Rev. iv. 8.

Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of Hosts:
That which fills the whole earth is His glory.

The word "holy," thrice repeated as if it struck the chord to which the whole nature of these pure beings vibrated (the ancient church found here an allusion to the mystery of the Trinity) sums up the meaning of the vision in so far as it is a revelation of God. The general notion of holiness is too complex to be analysed here. The root idea appears to be that of *distance* or *separation*. As a predicate of deity it expresses first of all the awful contrast between the divine and the human, and then those positive attributes of God which constitute true divinity, and call for the religious emotions of awe, reverence, and adoration. What Isaiah here receives, therefore, is a new and overpowering impression of the Supreme Godhead of Jehovah; the whole impact of the vision on his mind is concentrated in the word which he hears from the lips of the seraphim. Although the idea of holiness in the O.T. is never to be identified with that of moral purity, it is clear from Isaiah's immediate sense of guilt that ethical perfection is included among the attributes which make up the holiness or Godhead of Jehovah (see Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, pp. 224 ff. and the art. Holiness [in the O.T.] in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*).

The second line of the Trisagion celebrates the "glory" of Jehovah, His manifestation of Himself in nature,—one of the leading thoughts of the second part of this book (ch. xl. ff.). The seraphim contemplate the universal diffusion of this "glory" (*sub specie aeternitatis*) as a present fact; elsewhere it is an ideal yet to be realised: Num. xiv. 21; Hab. ii. 14; Ps. lxxii. 19, xcvi. 3.

4. *the foundations of the thresholds*] Isaiah seemed to feel the threshold on which he stood rock to its foundations. The expression, however, is difficult: the word for "foundations" does not occur elsewhere in a sense suitable to this context.

was filled (**began to fill**) *with smoke*] The smoke symbolises the "dark side of Jehovah's self-manifestation" (Rev. xv. 8), the reaction

5 smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone;
because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the
midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen
6 the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the

of His holy nature against sin. It answers to the rising consciousness of alienation and impurity in the prophet's mind, expressed in the next verse.

5. Isaiah is overwhelmed with the sense of his own unworthiness; he feels himself cut off by a spiritual defect from participation in the solemn mystery which he, alone of mortals, has been privileged to behold: his *eyes* have seen, but his *lips* are impure.

I am undone] The Vulgate and other ancient versions give the impossible rendering, "I have been silent" (*tacui*),—a confusion of the roots דמה and דמם. Jerome's paraphrase is interesting as explaining a curious legend, that Isaiah had already been a prophet, but had lost the gift of inspiration through his unfaithfulness: "quia tacui et non audacter Osiam regem corripui, ideo labia mea immunda sunt."

a man of unclean lips] "A pure lip" is required for the worship of Jehovah (Zeph. iii. 9); Isaiah would fain join in the praises of the Seraphim, but the impulse is checked by the uncleanness of his lips, which is the impurity of his whole nature concentrated, as it were, in the organs of expression. Isaiah is not yet a prophet; but in this profound sense of the necessity for a consecration of the faculty of speech we must surely recognise an unconscious preparation for the task of speaking the word of God.

a people of unclean lips] Cf. ch. iii. 8. The vision of God which has brought his own sin to light, reveals to him also the sinfulness of the people among whom he dwells. They too are unfit to take the holy name of Jehovah on their lips; their whole worship of Him is profane. And thus comes home to him as an aggravation of his guilt, that his mind is saturated with the atmosphere of ungodliness in which he lives and moves and has his being.

for mine eyes have seen the King] A second ground for the ejaculation "I am undone!" That the sight of God brings death to men is an idea frequently expressed in the O. T. (Ex. xix. 21, xxx. 20; Jud. xiii. 22); the preceding clauses shew that to Isaiah's consciousness the danger springs from sin, and not from mere creaturely frailty.

6, 7. The ceremony of purification is in many respects unique, and seems to involve several ideas: (1) It shews that contact with the fire of the divine holiness is not necessarily destructive even to man. It is possible to "dwell with devouring fire" (ch. xxxiii. 14). (2) It signifies the removal from the prophet of all in him which is incompatible with the holiness of Jehovah. Fire is both a symbol of holiness and an agent of purification (Num. xxxi. 23; Mal. iii. 2). "As earthly fire burns away external impurity, so the heavenly fire burns away the defilement of sin, first from the lips, but through them from the whole man" (Dillmann). (3) The ceremony of expiation signifies the

seraphim unto me, having a [1]live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched 7
my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips;
and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin [2]purged.
And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I 8
send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I;
send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye 9

[1] Or, *hot stone* [2] Or, *expiated*

immediate response of the divine order to the sense of guilt (Luke xviii. 14); it is an act of God's free grace, conditioned by no offering or ritual prestation or moral achievement on the part of Isaiah. (4) It is not without significance that the fire is taken "from off the altar." The **hot stone** (marg.) was an implement used in common life for transferring heat from the hearth to where it was required. The meaning of the Seraph's act is that the atoning efficacy of the altar is conveyed to the person of Isaiah, to his lips in particular, because there the sin of his nature had seemed to be concentrated.

7. *and thine iniquity...purged*] **and thy guilt passes away and thy sin is atoned for.** The last word is the technical term for the expiatory effect of the sacrificial ritual.

8. Now for the first time Isaiah hears the voice of God, the purification of his lips having fitted him for personal converse with Jehovah and spiritual sympathy with His purposes. Cf. Ps. li. 13—15.

who will go for us?] The plural is not that of majesty, but includes the "council of the holy ones" (Ps. lxxxix. 7), or the angelic "hosts of heaven" (2 Ki. xxii. 19 f.).

Here am I; send me] The spontaneity and self-abandonment of this response are characteristic of Isaiah. He is as yet ignorant of the nature of his commission, yet he freely accepts it; and throughout life he never felt his message to be a grievous burden, as Jeremiah often did.

9, 10. The first effect of Isaiah's prophetic work: to increase the spiritual insensibility of the people. The prophet's words will go hand in hand with the "work of Jehovah," the development of His purpose in history (*v.* 12, cf. Am. iii. 7); the people shall hear the one and see the other, but neither will bring them to true insight.

9. *this people*] A contemptuous designation of Israel, peculiar to Isaiah: cf. ch. viii. 6, 12, ix. 16, xxviii. 11, 14, xxix. 13 f. The term certainly applies to Judah; whether to North Israel as well is more doubtful; but it describes the nation in its actual unregenerate condition, and the ominous message which follows is by no means inconsistent with the hope that a remnant will repent and be saved.

Hear ye indeed...] Rather:

Hear ye continually, but perceive not;
And see ye continually, but understand not.

[1]indeed, but understand not; and see ye [1]indeed, but
10 perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make
their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with
their eyes, and hear with their ears, and [2]understand with
11 their heart, and turn again, and be healed. Then said I,
Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste
without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land

[1] Or, *continually* [2] Or, *their heart should understand*

The verbs, of course, are imperatives. On the force of the inf. abs. see Davidson, *Synt.* § 86 *c* (where, however, a different view of this particular passage is taken).

10. *Make the heart...fat*] i.e. callous, unfeeling (Ps. cxix. 70). In Hebrew idiom, the "heart" includes the understanding. *shut* (lit. **smear**) **its** *eyes*] cf. xxix. 10, xliv. 18, xlii. 19 f.

and turn again, and be healed] The phrase might also be rendered "and be healed again" (pointing וְיֵשָׁב); but there is nothing to recommend the change.

The difficulties created in our minds by this startling, and even harsh, statement of a great law of the spiritual world, are partly due to the tendency of Scripture writers to refer all things immediately to the will of God. To the Hebrew mind what we call secondary causes scarcely exist, at least in the sphere of religion. That which, in given circumstances, is the inevitable result of God's providential dispensations is viewed absolutely, apart from its conditions, as a distinct divine purpose. The truth revealed to Isaiah is that the unbelief of his countrymen amounts to an incapacity for divine things, which can only be intensified by the further disclosure of the truth of God. And this, which is the inevitable issue of his own prophetic mission, is represented to him as Jehovah's intention in sending him. Isaiah realises the profound truth that the most decisive and searching judgement to which men are subjected lies in the abundance of the revelations of God vouchsafed to them. It is a principle often appealed to in the New Testament, and frequently in the very words of our prophet (Matt. xiii. 14 f. and parallels; Acts xvi. 26 f.; Rom. xi. 8). "This is the judgement that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil" (John iii. 19).

11—13. The hardening of the people in unbelief is to be accompanied by a series of external judgements, culminating in the utter ruin of the nation.

11. *Lord, how long?*] The prophet feels that in the divine counsels there must be a limit to this process of judicial hardening, that it must reach a crisis with a day of hope beyond it. But the answer is "Not till the existing Israel has been annihilated."

Until cities...without man] Cf. ch. v. 9.

become utterly waste, and the LORD have removed men far 12
away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the
land. [1]And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again 13
be [2]eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, [3]whose [4]stock
remaineth, when they [5]are felled; so the holy seed is the
[4]stock thereof.

[1] Or, *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten up*
[2] Or, *burnt* [3] Or, *whose substance is in them*
[4] Or, *substance* [5] Or, *cast* their leaves

and the land become utterly waste] lit. "be wasted to desolation." LXX., changing a letter (תישאר for תישאה), reads (better) "and the land be left a desolation."

12. *and the forsaken places...land*] Better, **and great be the vacancy in the midst of the land.** The word "vacancy" (deserted place) is used in xvii. 9: for the thought cf. ch. v. 9, vii. 16 ff.

13. The verse reads:

And should there still be in it a tenth,
It must again pass through the fire,
Like the terebinth and like the oak,
To which a stump (remains) when they are felled.
A holy seed is the stump thereof.

The last clause is an interpolation, wanting in the LXX., and with its omission it undoubtedly becomes *possible* to understand the figure of the verse as a sentence of final rejection: not only will the tree be cut down, but its stump will be destroyed by fire. The usual interpretation (which there is no reason to abandon) is: As the terebinth and oak when cut down retain the principle of vitality in their roots, which will again spring up into a great tree (cf. Job xiv. 7 ff.), so the ruined Israel contains the indestructible germ of the future kingdom of God. The difference is not material, since on any view Isaiah speaks of an extermination of the actually existing people: but the first explanation excludes Isaiah's characteristic doctrine of the Remnant, which we should certainly expect to find in his inaugural vision. It must have been shortly after this time that he gave a significant expression to that doctrine in the name of his son *Shear-jashub* (see on next chapter).

A symbolical representation of the idea of this verse is given in Ez. v. 1—4. Cf. also Zech. xiii. 8.

CHAPTERS VII. 1.—IX. 7.

A collection of prophecies belonging to the reign of Ahaz. Two important events in Isaiah's career are here chronicled. (1) The first is his *début* as a practical statesman, seeking to shape the destinies of his country by a definite policy urged on the king and his advisers. (2) The second is the formation of a band of disciples, accompanied

apparently by the prophet's temporary withdrawal from public life (viii. 16—18). Hence we obtain an obvious division of the section into two parts, which may have been separated by a considerable interval of time, although there is no reason to doubt that the whole was written before the death of Ahaz. (1) Ch. vii. 1—viii. 15 is a summary of Isaiah's activity during the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion; (2) viii. 19—ix. 7 probably represents the instruction communicated by the prophet to the inner circle of his believing adherents. In both parts the chapters exhibit the working out in history of the principles revealed in the latter part of ch. vi. The "great refusal" of Ahaz (vii. 12), approved as it seems to have been by public opinion, was a signal illustration of the judicial hardening produced by the overwhelming clearness of the divine revelation; and the gathering of a small religious fellowship round the person and family of the prophet shews how the doctrine of the remnant or the "holy seed" became from this time a practical ideal in his ministry.

In order to understand Isaiah's words and actions at this period it is necessary to realise as clearly as possible the salient features of the political situation created in Judah by the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion. Hostilities on the part of both Syria and Ephraim against Judah are recorded as having commenced before the death of Jotham (2 Ki. xv. 37), though there is no mention at that time of a formal alliance between the two powers. It was only after the accession of Ahaz that the crisis became acute; and the words of *v.* 2 seem to point to the sudden development of a new and formidable danger. This consisted in the avowed object of the league to destroy the independence of Judah by the removal of the native dynasty and the establishment of a creature of the allies on the throne of David (*v.* 6). At the same time the country was invaded by the Edomites and Philistines, who were on the side of the coalition (2 Chr. xxviii. 16 ff.). It is generally and no doubt rightly supposed that the ultimate motive of the attack was to coerce Judah into a coalition to oppose the westward progress of the Assyrian arms. To allay what he perceived to be a groundless alarm on the part of the king and court was one purpose of Isaiah's memorable interview with Ahaz. But this of itself does not explain the extraordinary vehemence and urgency of the prophet's appeal. It becomes more intelligible if we suppose that he wished to warn the king against the policy of calling in the aid of Assyria against his two petty foes. It is only reasonable to suppose that this obvious and tempting expedient had already been discussed in the royal council and was favourably entertained by Ahaz. Isaiah was no doubt alive to the grave political dangers which would result from placing the country in a position of servitude to the Assyrian Empire. He also perceived how unnecessary it was for Judah to make any advances in that direction at this time, since it was quite certain that the ambitious schemes of Rezin and Pekah would speedily be crushed by Tiglath-pileser, whether Ahaz applied to him or not. But the prophet perceived that higher interests than the political future of the nation were at stake. He was opposed,

And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of 7
Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it; but could

on religious grounds, to all compacts with heathen powers as involving disloyalty to Jehovah and distrust of His power. The crisis presented itself to him as a test of the religious mind of the people, of its capacity for exercising that fearless trust in Jehovah's word which alone could guide it safely through the complications of the immediate future to the felicity that lay beyond. Hence the great object of this encounter with Ahaz is to bring round the king to Isaiah's own attitude of calm reliance on the help of God, and to dissuade him from compromising his position by entering into direct relations with Assyria.

Ch. VII. Isaiah's Interview with Ahaz and its Consequences.

The chapter is divided into two well-marked sections:

i. *vv.* 1—17. The prophet meets Ahaz at a critical juncture of the war and holds out a promise of deliverance on the condition of faith in Jehovah. The king's unbelief is answered by the threat of an Assyrian invasion.

(1) The historical introduction (*vv.* 1—3).

(2) The divine message of assurance and encouragement, ending with a warning against unbelief (*vv.* 4—9).

(3) If any sign in heaven or earth will overcome the king's incredulity, he has but to name it and it shall come to pass (*vv.* 10, 11). Ahaz still remains obdurate (*v.* 12).

(4) Isaiah announces the God-given sign of Immanuel (*vv.* 13—17). See Additional Note, pp. 61–68.

ii. *vv.* 18—25. An expansion of the threat of *v.* 17, but probably not spoken to Ahaz at the time. It is a picture of the desolation of the land, ravaged by Egyptian and Assyrian troops, and left destitute of all but the scantiest means of human subsistence.

1. The genealogy of Ahaz seems unnecessary for the contemporaries of Isaiah, although it might be given to connect the passage with ch. vi. 1. But the latter part of the verse closely resembles 2 Ki. xvi. 5; and it is probable that the data were supplied by an editor from the historical book, in order to make the circumstances intelligible to later generations of readers. The verse summarises the whole course of the campaign, up to and beyond the time of Isaiah's interview with Ahaz. Originally the introduction may have run: "And in the days of Ahaz it was reported to the house of David," &c. *Rēzîn* is an incorrectly vocalised form in the Hebrew (both here and in 2 Ki.) of the true name *Rāzôn*: Assyrian *Ra-ṣun-nu*; LXX. Ῥα[α]σσων.

to war against it; but could not prevail against it] lit. **to fight against it but was unable to fight against it** (for "was" read "were"

2 not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David,
saying, Syria [1]is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart
was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the
forest are moved with the wind.
3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz,
thou, and [2]Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit
4 of the upper pool, in the high way of the fuller's field; and

[1] Heb. *resteth on Ephraim.* [2] That is, *A remnant shall return.*

as in 2 Ki.). From 2 Ki. xvi. 5 we learn that the city was blockaded. It was the object of the allies to take it by assault, but in this they were baffled, either by reason of the strength of the place, or because they were compelled to raise the siege. "Fight" means "fight at close quarters" or "assault," as 2 Sam. xi. 20 compared with *v.* 1.

2. *the house of David*] (Cf. *vv.* 13, 17) either the court (ch. xxii. 22) or the royal family (1 Sam. xx. 16, &c.), which must have formed a numerous and powerful caste, and must have exercised a considerable influence on the government under a young king like Ahaz. This was probably the first time that the Davidic dynasty had been menaced by a serious danger.

Syria is confederate with Ephraim] lit. **Syria has alighted upon Ephraim** (marg. "resteth"). The idea seems to be that the Syrian armies already occupy the Ephraimitish territory (settling there like a swarm of locusts, *v.* 19: or like dew, 2 Sam. xvii. 12) preparatory to the joint attack. The fine simile at the end of the verse is enough to prove that Isaiah himself is the narrator.

3. The prophet is instructed to meet Ahaz at a certain point outside the city, taking his son with him for a sign to the king.

Shear-jashub] "Remnant-shall-turn," i.e. "turn to Jehovah," not "return from exile" (ch. x. 22). How much the name meant to Ahaz we cannot tell; nor is it clear whether the boy was present to have the incident impressed on his own memory, or to recall to the king's mind some earlier prophecy of Isaiah in which the name was explained. The latter is more probable. In any case the name embodies a fundamental idea of Isaiah's ministry (see on ch. vi. 13), and if it conveyed any significance to Ahaz at this time it was a prediction at once of judgement and hope: a remnant shall turn; but *only* a remnant!

at the end of the conduit...field] On the same spot the Rabshakeh stood 34 years later and delivered Sennacherib's insulting message to Hezekiah. It seems therefore to have been within earshot of the wall (ch. xxxvi. 2, cf. *v.* 11; 2 Ki. xviii. 17, 26). On what side of the city it is to be sought is as yet a matter of conjecture. (1) The "upper pool" is by many identified with the *Birket el-Mamilla* (about half a mile to the west of the city), from which a canal leads to reservoirs within the walls. In this case it would be difficult to explain the expression "go

say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither
let thine heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking
firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of
the son of Remaliah. Because Syria hath counselled evil 5
against thee, Ephraim *also*, and the son of Remaliah,

ort to the end of the conduit," and besides the distance from the wall is too great. (2) Tradition fixes the site of the Assyrian camp on the north of the city, and here an ancient aqueduct (older than Herod's temple) has been discovered which pierces the wall to the east of the Damascus gate, and discharges into a large reservoir in the northern quarter of the city. If this reservoir be the "upper pool" the end of its conduit would be the northern extremity of the canal mentioned. (3) A third suggestion is that the "upper pool" like the "lower pool" (ch. xxii. 9) was in the south of the city and inside the wall. It has been identified with a recently-discovered pool near the present pool of Siloam, and a conduit has also been excavated which carried its surplus water outside the wall, to where the "fuller's field" is thought to have been. Ahaz was at this anxious moment devoting his personal attention to the water supply of his capital. Operations were apparently in progress either for filling the reservoirs and cisterns within the city, or for stopping the sources that would be accessible to the enemy. In the historic sieges of Jerusalem the assailants always suffered more from scarcity of water than the defenders; and it is not impossible that the precautions taken on this occasion were one reason why the allies "were not able to fight against it."

4 The message to Ahaz begins with an exhortation to composure and presence of mind (cf. ch. xxx. 15). The prophet does not deprecate reasonable forethought for the safety of the city, but only the excessive alarm which might drive the court into a false and dangerous policy.

Take heed, and be quiet] The first verb might be subordinate to the second: "See that thou keep calm." But it is better to take them independently: "ut et exterius contineat sese, et intus pacato sit animo" (Calvin).

these two tails of smoking firebrands] This enterprise is but the last flicker of two expiring torches. Syria and Israel have both suffered severely from internecine warfare, and their national independence will speedily be extinguished. Fire is the emblem of war (ch. xlii. 25).

the son of Remaliah] Pekah was a usurper, a *novus homo*, and Isaiah never condescends to utter his name. Cf. *vv.* 5, 9.

5–7. The project of Rezin and Pekah is opposed to the purpose of Jehovah and shall come to nought. The verses form a single sentence, 5 and 6 being the protasis and 7 the apodosis.

5. *Because Syria hath counselled evil against thee*] The following words *Ephraim and the son of Remaliah* are not represented in the somewhat confused rendering of the LXX., and from their position are probably to be regarded as a gloss.

6 saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us
make a breach therein for us, and set up a king in the midst
7 of it, even the son of Tabeel: thus saith the Lord GOD, It
8 shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head
of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin:
and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be
9 broken in pieces, that it be not a people: and the head of

6. *and vex it*] Rather "frighten it" (cf. *v.* 16, where the *Qal* of the same verb means "cower"), unless we adopt a very probable conjecture of Gesenius (ונציקנה) giving the sense **press it hard** (cf. ch. xxix. 7).

make a breach therein] **break into it**, by forcing the passes (2 Chr. xxi. 17), if the reference be to Judah; or **make a breach in it**, if the reference be to Jerusalem (2 Ki. xxv. 4; 2 Chr. xxxii. 1).

the son of Tabeel] Another obscure adventurer like the son of Remaliah. The form of the name (*Tāb'ēl*, cf. *Tab-rimmon*, 1 Ki. xv. 18) suggests that the *protégé* of the allies was a Syrian. Their plan is very complete; the successor of Ahaz is already nominated.

8, 9. A confirmation of *v.* 7; but the thought is difficult to grasp. The general meaning may be that the league is an attempt to obliterate the political distinctions which Jehovah has established between the neighbouring states. Syria and Ephraim are separate nationalities, each with its own capital and king; Judah belongs to neither of them and is not to be amalgamated with them. In short: "Damascus is the head of Syria *and of nothing else*, &c." But more probably the idea dimly suggested is that this shallow scheme, and the political force by which it is to be carried out, have no higher origin than the brains and resources of two weak men; whereas only that which proceeds from the immutable counsel of Jehovah comes to pass. We may even suppose (with Ewald) that Isaiah intended to add, "but the head of Judah is Jerusalem and the head of Jerusalem is Jehovah of Hosts."

8. *and within threescore and five years...people*] This clause is suspicious on several grounds. (1) Because of its position; Ephraim has not yet been mentioned, and a prophecy of its annihilation would hardly have been followed by an argument (9*a*) which assumes its continued independence. (2) There is no analogy in the prophets for so exact a specification of time with regard to a distant event. When the prophets fix a term of years they use round numbers (ch. xxiii. 17, &c.). (3) Isaiah could not expect to allay the fears of Ahaz by a prediction that was not to be fulfilled for 65 years. In *v.* 16 and ch. viii. 4 he foretells the overthrow of Pekah and Rezin within a very short period. Even Delitzsch, who defends the verse as a whole, admits the force of the last two objections and proposes to substitute the words "within a little while." But the great majority of commentators agree in regarding the whole clause as a marginal gloss, intended to be read *after* the first half of *v.* 9. This view ought probably to be accepted; but Duhm rightly observes that the gloss must be a very old one, since a late

Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

10 And the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee 11

annotator would almost certainly have dated the extermination of Ephraim from the destruction of Samaria in 721, about 15 years after Isaiah spoke. What precise event he had in his mind is indeed very uncertain. The most plausible conjecture remains that of Archbishop Ussher, who explained it of the settlement of foreign colonists in Samaria by Esar-haddon or Asshurbanipal (Osnappar, Ezra iv. 2, 10). Sixty-five years from the assigned date of the prediction would bring us to about 670 B.C.; and Esar-haddon was succeeded by Asshurbanipal about 668.

9. If ye will not believe (*te'āmînû*) **ye shall not be established** (*te'āmenû*, 2 Sam. vii. 16). One of Isaiah's paronomasias; "*glaubet* ihr nicht, so *bleibet* ihr nicht" (Luther); "if ye will not have *faith*, ye shall not have *stand*" (G. A. Smith). Cf. 2 Chron. xx. 20. The words mark an epoch in the history of revelation; never before probably had the distinctively religious principle of faith been so plainly exhibited as the touchstone of character and of destiny (cf. Gen. xv. 6; Hab. ii. 4). Here as throughout Scripture faith means trust in the positive revelation of God, the faith required of Ahaz being whole-hearted acceptance of God's word through Isaiah. "Faith is the capacity for apprehending and discerning (*zu ahnen und zu spüren*) that which the prophet clearly beholds.... That the seer sees had long been a commonplace; but that the ordinary man possesses an analogous faculty, and that he must use it in order to conquer the spiritual world for himself, that is a truth first recognised and enunciated by Isaiah" (Duhm). The doctrine is one of the foundation truths of the prophet's ministry (cf. xxviii. 16, xxx. 15; and see Introd. p. lix f.).

10—12. Isaiah's last ineffectual effort to bring Ahaz to the attitude of faith. A sign is offered and refused.

10. *And the LORD spake again*] Better, **And Jehovah spake further.** The expression does not of itself imply that this second communication followed immediately on the first, but that is certainly the most natural supposition.

11. *Ask thee a sign*] The "sign" (*'ôth*, *môphēth*, here the former), plays a very large part in O.T. religion and with considerable latitude of meaning. The most important cases are those in which a divine revelation is attested by some striking event within the range of immediate perception through the senses. Such a sign may be a supernatural occurrence conveying an irresistible persuasion of the divine agency (ch. xxxviii. 7, 22; Ex. vii. 8 ff.; Jud. vi. 17, 36 ff.; 1 Ki. xiii. 1 ff.). But it may also be an ordinary event, which acquires significance through its having been foretold, or asked for (Gen. xxiv. 14; 1 Sam. x. 2 ff.; xiv. 10; Luke ii. 12). Thus of two predicted events the nearer may be made a "sign" of the more remote (1 Sam. ii. 34; Jer. xliv. 29 f.).

a sign of the LORD thy God; [1]ask it either in the depth, or
12 in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither
13 will I tempt the LORD. And he said, Hear ye now, O
house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men,
14 that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord

[1] According to some ancient authorities, *make it deep unto Sheol.*

Or, in a still more general sense, the "sign" may be merely an incident of the fulfilled prediction, which carries the mind back to the time of the prophecy, when the sign was appointed (Ex. iii. 12; Is. xxxvii. 30). That for which a sign is here offered to Ahaz is the certainty of divine help, or (what is the same thing) the truth that God speaks to him through the prophet. Although Isaiah was undoubtedly prepared to give a miraculous sign (see next clause) it is not to be at once assumed that the sign actually given (*vv.* 14 ff.) must be of the same order.

ask it either in the depth...above] Lit.: **going deep to Sheol** (see marg.) **or mounting high above** (reading *shĕ'ēlāh* for *shĕ'ālāh*). It is thought by some that this translation could be obtained from the actual Hebrew vocalisation, but this is doubtful. It is at all events the one that would be most readily suggested by an unpointed text, and it is justified by the antithetic structure of the sentence. The whole realm of creation, from the heavens to the underworld, is as it were put at the disposal of Ahaz for the purpose of this sign. It has been said that Isaiah played a dangerous game in staking his reputation on so unbounded a choice. Undoubtedly he did, if he was not speaking under genuine divine inspiration.

12. The answer of Ahaz reveals his utter incapacity for the faith which Isaiah demanded. He evidently believes that the sign will happen if he asks it, yet he cannot trust the spiritual fact which lies behind it. He is afraid of being committed to a policy in which he has no confidence, and therefore, under a pretence of reverence, he declines the ordeal. He **will not put Jehovah to the proof.** To "put Jehovah to the proof" is a mark of unbelief (Ex. xvii. 7; Deut. vi. 16), but to refuse a proof which Jehovah Himself offers is an insult to the divine majesty which exhausts the patience of the Almighty.

13. Speaking under the deepest excitement, the prophet proceeds to unfold the consequences of such impenetrable hardness of heart.

is it a small thing for you...] Trans. **Is it too little for you to weary men** (i.e. the prophet himself) **that ye weary**, &c. The *house of David* is addressed, perhaps because Isaiah had already experienced rebuffs from the royal princes, although none was so direct a defiance of God as this of Ahaz. *my God*] contrast *thy God* in *v.* 11. Ahaz has practically renounced allegiance to Jehovah.

14—17. The sign of Immanuel. See Additional Note at the end of this section (pp. 61 ff.).

14. *Therefore*] because of this act of unbelief. *the Lord himself*] The word is *Adonai*, as ch. vi. 1.

himself shall give you a sign: behold, [1]a [2]virgin [3]shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name [4]Immanuel.

[1] Or, *the* [2] Or, *maiden* [3] Or, *is with child, and beareth* [4] That is, *God is with us.*

behold, a virgin] (LXX. ἡ παρθένος, other Greek versions νεᾶνις.) Marg. **the maiden**. The Hebrew word (*'almāh*) means strictly "a young woman of marriageable age." Both etymology and usage (cf. esp. Prov. xxx. 19; Cant. vi. 8) are adverse to the opinion, once prevalent among Christian interpreters and maintained by a few in recent times, that virginity is necessarily connoted (see Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, pp. 426 f.). To express that idea a different word (*bĕthûlāh*) must have been employed, although even it might not be wholly free from ambiguity (? Joel i. 8). It is, of course, not disputed that *'almāh may* be used of a virgin (as Gen. xxiv. 43; Ex. ii. 8); but even if this usage were more uniform than it is, it would still be far from proving that virginity was an essential of the notion. It would appear, therefore, that the idea of a miraculous conception was not present to Isaiah's mind at this time, since a prediction of such astounding import must surely have been clothed in unambiguous language. Nor does the def. art., which is used in the original, *necessarily* denote a particular individual. (Cf. 2 Sam. xvii. 17, and see Davidson, *Synt.* § 21 *c*.) So far as grammar and context go, the expression *might* mean any young woman, fit to become a mother, whether as yet married or unmarried. At the same time it may fairly be urged that the use of the art. here is not only superfluous but even misleading unless an understood person is meant.

shall conceive, and bear a son] The same phrase in Gen. xvi. 11; Jud. xiii. 5. In the passage before us the verbs in the original are both participles, and might refer either to the present or the future. But it is doubtful if we can fairly apply one to the present and the other to the future, translating "*is* with child and *shall* bear." No doubt that is the sense in Gen. xvi. 11 (if not also in Jud. xiii. 5); but there the words apply to the person addressed, and it is a question whether the second should not be read as 2nd pers. fem. of the perfect (*yāladt*). The Massoretes appear to have seen a distinction between the two cases; for instead of the usual participial form *yôledet* (as here) they point in the other two passages abnormally *yôladt*. Since the birth is certainly future, it seems natural to take the first verb in a future sense also.

and shall call] An archaic form, easily mistaken for 2nd. pers. (so LXX. &c.). The mother names the child, as in Gen. iv. 1, 25; xix. 37 f.; xxix. 32, &c. An instructive parallel is the naming of the child Ichabod, born to Eli's daughter-in-law on the dark day when the ark of God was taken and the glory departed from Israel (1 Sam. iv. 19—22).

Immanuel] "With us is God." The battle-cry of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years War, "Gott mit uns," was also Isaiah's watchword for the coming crisis (cf. ch. viii. 8, 10); and like other

15 [1]Butter and honey shall he eat, [2]when he knoweth to refuse

[1] Or, *Curds* [2] Or, *that he may know*

great thoughts of his ministry he as it were gives it personal and concrete actuality by conceiving it as embodied in the name of a child.

15. *Butter and honey shall he eat*] This clause is usually explained by modern scholars in accordance with *v.* 22, where the eating of butter (lit. "curds") and (wild) honey is supposed to be a symptom of the primitive simplicity to which human life is reduced by the cessation of agriculture. The meaning would then be that the youth of Immanuel will be spent amidst the privations of a land laid waste by foreign invaders. But the natural associations of the phrase are certainly unfavourable to this interpretation. In the O.T. curds and honey (Job xx. 17; Deut. xxxii. 13 f.), or the former alone (Job xxix. 6; Gen. xviii. 8; Jud. v. 25; 2 Sam. xvii. 27 ff.) are always a synonym for luxurious diet; and in Assyrian the equivalent combination (*dišpu himetu*) is used to denote the fulness of divine blessing. Again, the expression "milk and honey" is a standing feature in ideal descriptions of the land of Canaan as an earthly paradise (Ex. iii. 8, 17, &c.); and it is unreasonable to suppose that the substitution of the highly valued *hem'āh* for ordinary milk (*ḥālāḇ*) should convert the phrase into its opposite (see Gray's forcible argument, pp. 129 f.). These considerations now appear to us decisive against the current explanation which, after all, has very dubious support in *v.* 22 (see below). It is a question whether we should not go further, and trace a connexion on the one hand with the mixture of curds and honey which played a great part in Babylonian cultus, and on the other with the Greek belief that infant deities (Zeus, Dionysus, &c.) were nourished on milk and honey (see Gressmann, *Ursprung der isr.-jud. Eschatologie*, pp. 211 ff.). This attractive speculation leads straight to the conclusion that Immanuel is conceived as a divine child.

when he knoweth] (more precisely "towards the time when, &c."). It must be admitted that *exact* parallels to this use of the preposition cannot be produced (though cf. Gen. xxiv. 63; Ex. xiv. 27). The LXX. (*πρὶν ἢ γνῶναι*) *may* point to a variant לפני דעתו older than M.T. The rendering of the Vulgate and other ancient versions *that he may know* is easier grammatically; and might with difficulty be accepted on the theory that Immanuel is a divine child: he will be sustained by the food of the gods that he may arrive at the age of discretion. But what lapse of time is here indicated? The expression "refuse the evil and choose the good" must bear the same sense as in *v.* 16, and from ch. viii. 4 we see that the event predicted in *v.* 16 was expected to happen in a very short time,—within two or three years from the date of the interview with Ahaz. It would seem, therefore, that the phrase denotes the age at which a child begins to exercise intelligent choice between the pleasant and the painful (cf. 2 Sam. xix. 35). Many

the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall 16
know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land
whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken. The 17
LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon
thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day
that Ephraim departed from Judah; *even* the king of
Assyria.

commentators, it is true, explain it of the development of moral consciousness, and think of a period of 10 or 12 years or even longer. But this introduces a needless discrepancy between this sign and that of viii. 4. There is nothing improbable in the supposition that Isaiah expected the Assyrian invasion of Judah (which is predicted in *v.* 17) to happen simultaneously with the destruction of Samaria and Damascus.

16. The "for" seems to go back to *v.* 14: he shall be called "God with us," because whilst he is yet in infancy the divine intervention shall take place.

the land **before** *whose two kings thou* **art cowering** *shall be* **deserted** (see ch. vi. 12)]. The two "tails of smoking firebrands" shall have burned out. No other rendering seems admissible; but it is a serious objection to the clause, that Ephraim and Syria are treated as one territory, ruled by the two allied kings.

17 gives the threatening aspect of the sign Immanuel. A calamity involving the king, the dynasty, and the nation, is the retribution appointed for the unbelief of Ahaz. There is no justification for detaching this verse from the oracle *vv.* 14—16; still less for treating it as an editorial link between *vv.* 14—16, and 18 ff. It would be more rational to remove the awkward clause 16*b* as a gloss or a variant, and take 17 as the apodosis to 16*a*.

from the day...Judah] The revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam was the heaviest disaster that had ever befallen the house of David. The last words, *the king of Assyria*, may as many think be a gloss, but they are at least a correct gloss.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAP. VII. 14—17.

In the above notes we have tried to leave open every admissible interpretation of those expressions and connexions of thought which are ambiguous or obscure in this difficult passage. We shall now proceed to indicate the chief lines on which a solution has been sought, and to consider how far they lead to a satisfying result.

The prophecy as it stands consists of two parts: the Sign in *vv.* 14, 15; and the Interpretation of the sign in *vv.* 16, 17. It is of course a question whether the text before us preserves the words originally spoken by Isaiah without expansion or mutilation, and in particular whether the oracle ends with *v.* 16 or with *v.* 17. Here it must suffice to say that there is

no *prima facie* reason to suspect any element of the text; and if excisions be required by any particular theory their legitimacy must be determined mainly by the inherent plausibility of the solution in whose interest they are proposed.

Immanuel, then, is a "sign" to Ahaz, or rather to the house of David of which he is the representative (לָכֶם "to you" [pl.], *v.* 14). The two leading questions that arise are: Of what is he the sign? And in what precisely does the sign consist? The second of these is perhaps the more central, and it is at any rate convenient to arrange the principal theories according to the answer which they give to it. Now there are four features of the prediction in which the import of the sign may be looked for: (i) the birth of the child, (ii) his name, (iii) his history, and (iv) his person. And of these the third is certainly an essential element of the prophecy, as is shewn by *vv.* 15, 16. With regard to the first two we may say that it is improbable that either of them should be without some special significance.

(i) If the import of the sign be sought mainly in the *birth* of the child, it becomes almost necessary to assume that the terms of the prophecy point to something extraordinary and mysterious in the circumstances of the birth. This is the case with the traditional Christian interpretation, which finds in it a direct prediction of the miraculous birth of our Lord. The chief support of this view has always been the authority of the evangelist Matthew, who cites *v.* 14 in relation to the birth of Jesus (i. 22 f.). But it must be observed that such a citation is not decisive as to the *original* sense of the passage, any more than Matt. ii. 15 determines the original sense of Hos. xi. 1. The great difficulty of the interpretation is that the event could by no means serve the purpose of a sign to Ahaz. It may be freely admitted, in view of *v.* 11, that the expectation of a parthenogenesis is not too bold to be attributed to Isaiah in this moment of ecstatic inspiration. But if this be granted on the one hand it must be conceded on the other that he expected the miracle to be wrought immediately: his language ("a virgin is about to conceive") implies that the prediction is on the eve of fulfilment, and the assurance in *v.* 16 is nugatory if the promised sign was not to happen for more than 700 years. Whatever element of truth, therefore, may underlie this exegesis, it can scarcely be held to afford an adequate solution of the problem presented by the oracle in its primary and historical application.

(ii) Another class of explanations lays the emphasis on the *naming* of the child. Perhaps the most persuasive presentation of this view is that given by Duhm. According to that expositor the *'almah* is any young mother (or many such) who may give birth to a child in the hour of Judah's deliverance from Syria and Ephraim. "God is with us" will be the spontaneous exclamation of child-bearing women in that time; and to such utterances at the moment of birth a certain oracular significance was attached, which caused them to be perpetuated in the name of the child (1 Sam. iv. 19 ff.). The child (or children)

bearing the name Immanuel will grow up as a sign to Ahaz, first of the genuineness of Isaiah's inspiration, who foretold the event, and next of his own rejection by Yahwe. But this general conception of the nature of the sign branches out into several applications in answer to the question, *Of what* is the name Immanuel the sign?

(1) In the view of Duhm himself, and of most who accept his principle, it is a sign of speedy deliverance from Syria and Ephraim—of that and nothing more. Now to this interpretation no exception can be taken on grammatical or linguistic grounds. It is recommended by its simplicity and its congruity with the purpose of Isaiah's first message to Ahaz (v. 4), viz. to assure him that no real danger was to be apprehended from the coalition. It gives to the word "sign" a retrospective reference which we have seen (on *v.* 11) to be quite in accordance with Old Testament usage. And indeed of all attempts at a purely psychological solution it is probably the most successful.

Nevertheless it labours under serious disadvantages. (*a*) It necessitates the omission of *v.* 17, and (in the opinion of most of its supporters) of *v.* 15 also, the eating of curd and honey being commonly taken to symbolise a state of privation. Even if with Gray we explain *v.* 15 in a favourable sense (see on the *v.*), it is still difficult to see what could have suggested the idea that the food of children in that generation would be specially luxurious. Such excisions may be justified if no better solution can be found; but so long as the verses themselves excite no suspicion, a theory which demands their exclusion is so far discredited. (*b*) There is a certain disagreement between the supposed meaning of the sign and the interpretation which the prophet himself gives of it in *v.* 16. The name Immanuel is *not* a sign of a deliverance already past, but of an event still future, viz. the devastation of the land of Syria and Ephraim by the Assyrians. It would be strange if the prophet passed over in silence the one circumstance which gave meaning to the name Immanuel, and concentrated attention on the very event which Ahaz himself hoped by his policy to bring about. If the explanation were right, we should have expected *v.* 16 to read: "For before the child *is born*, the land (of Judah) shall have been forsaken by the two kings whom thou fearest." (*c*) We cannot readily attribute to Isaiah the belief that mothers in Judah would express their thankfulness for escape from a passing danger in the word Immanuel. Such an exclamation would imply a widely diffused faith that the deliverance had been wrought by the intervention of Jehovah. Did the prophet expect to find such faith in the land, and so soon? (*d*) Even after the elimination of *v.* 15, there are concrete features of the prediction which cannot be adequately accounted for by this hypothesis. To say nothing of the question whether the definite article can be fairly explained as that of the *genus*, why, for instance, should the mother be an *'almah*—a *young* woman? (*e*) And lastly, if a subjective impression may be trusted, there is an impassioned fervour in the utterance, and an atmosphere of mystery hanging around the conception, to which this theory does no justice.

(2) An ingenious suggestion propounded by F. C. Porter[1] would exclude the idea of deliverance from the import of the sign, and make Immanuel a symbol of judgement exclusively. The name embodies the religious optimism of the king and nation, their false trust in the protection of Jehovah; but the hardships through which the child passes (*v.* 15) symbolise the providential course of events under which this delusive confidence must collapse. The significance of the sign thus lies in the *contrast* between the *name* of the child and his *history*. This interpretation involves the excision of at least the latter part of *v.* 16; and otherwise does not seem to have received any support.

(3) Yet another form of the theory takes the sign to be one of deliverance from the immediate peril, followed by the crowning disaster of an Assyrian invasion. In a recent paper by Guthe[2] this view is expounded with remarkable acuteness and skill. He considers the sign to be an exact replica of the prophecy to which it is attached, and divides each into two parts: a promise 14*b* 16, and a threat 15 | 17. But the emphasis in each case lies on the threat; the promise is *concessive* merely; and the sense would be expressed by some such renderings as these: "She shall (indeed) call his name Immanuel (in token of deliverance; *but*) curd and honey shall he eat, &c." (a symbol of hardship); and again: "The land (of Syria and Ephraim) shall (indeed) be forsaken; (*but*) the Lord shall bring, &c." This somewhat subtle exegesis has certainly the merit of comprehensiveness, and of conserving the text as it stands, though with a doubtful explanation of *v.* 15. It is, however, open to most of the objections advanced against (1); and we cannot but feel that by connecting the name Immanuel with a deliverance experienced *before* the judgement it deprives that name of its proper value in the forecast of the future to which it belongs.

(iii) A third explanation lays stress not so much on the birth or the name, as on the *history* of the child, which becomes a sort of chronological thread on which political events are strung. The meaning is: before a certain child, soon to be born, has emerged from infancy, Syria and Ephraim will have disappeared (*v.* 16), and at a later stage of his development the land of Judah will be reduced to a pastoral wilderness (*v.* 15) through the Assyrian invasion (*v.* 17)[3]. It will be seen that this view runs closely parallel to the one last considered; and indeed it is not possible to separate absolutely this class of theories

[1] *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1895, pp. 19 ff.

[2] See the Wellhausen *Festschrift*, pp. 177 ff.

[3] An interesting parallel is found in the child Pollio in Virgil's fourth Eclogue; and another from the life of Mohammed has been pointed out by Professor Bevan. The incident is that of a Jew who was discoursing to an Arab tribe at Medina about the resurrection and the last judgement. "'But,' said they, 'what is the *sign* (Āyat, Heb. אות) of this?' 'A prophet,' he answered, 'sent from that country yonder,' pointing with his hand towards Mecca and Yemen. 'But when,' they asked, 'do you think he will come?' Then he looked at me and said, '*If this boy reaches the full term of life he will see him.*' And in fact before another day had passed God sent His Apostle to dwell among us, and we believed on him, &c." (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1893, pp. 220 ff.).

from those given under (ii). The difference is that a particular actual child is looked for as the subject of the sign; and accordingly several guesses have been hazarded as to the identity of the *'almah* and her son. She has been supposed to be (*a*) the wife of Isaiah, either the mother of Shear-jashub, or a second wife (some even identifying Immanuel with Maher-shalal-hash-baz (viii. 3), (*b*) a damsel in the harem of Ahaz (the mother of Hezekiah is excluded by the chronology), or (*c*) a young woman among the bystanders, indicated by a gesture. None of these conjectures can be pronounced altogether happy. They are all alike discredited by a certain touch of vulgarity implied in the designation of a known individual as "the damsel."

(iv) The explanations hitherto dealt with may be described as historical, inasmuch as they presume some sort of empirical realisation of the sign, and that in such a way as to confirm Isaiah's original message to Ahaz. But when we look more closely into the mind and attitude of the prophet during the interview, we may be led to question whether the promised child is after all a sign of the deliverance from Syria and Ephraim, and whether he may not be a *personage* belonging to the ideal future kingdom, who is in himself the pledge that that kingdom is about to appear. There are several things which lead towards this conclusion.

First, the refusal of Ahaz to ask for a sign. If the sign had been offered as an assurance that the attack of the allies would fail, there is no conceivable reason why he should not have welcomed it. The ground of his refusal must have been his unwillingness to have any proof that the hand of God was to be discerned in this crisis at all. We may assume therefore that what Isaiah most desired to impress on the king and his advisers was that Jehovah *was* about to intervene decisively in the history of His people. This idea would be expressed by the name Immanuel. *Second*, the presence of the boy Shear-jashub (*v.* 3); shewing that the idea of the Remnant was in Isaiah's mind at the time. We can scarcely be wrong in thinking that he presented it to the king as an alternative: either the leaders of the state will "turn" in faith to the Lord, and so all Judah may form the remnant; or they will follow a worldly policy, and then the state will be ruined and only a remnant shall be saved. Lastly, we have to note the terms of Isaiah's message to Ahaz. The salient points are these three: "Take heed and be quiet" (*v.* 4); "it shall not stand and it shall not be" (*v.* 7); "if ye will not believe ye shall not be established" (*v.* 9). This is much more than an assertion that the project of the allies will prove abortive; it is a statement of the reason why it is *bound* to fail, viz. because it is not grounded in the divine world-purpose. Taking all this into account we see that Isaiah's view of the crisis is purely religious or, as we should say, eschatological. His essential message is that God is bringing to an end the existing world-order, and is about to usher in His final reign of righteousness through judgement. With the evidence of the king's unbelief the fate of Judah as a nation is sealed; and all the elements of the political situation appear to have suddenly crystallised

in the prophet's mind into that picture of the future which is unfolded in the cycle of oracles to which this chapter belongs. "The prophet casts his eye forward over the whole destiny of the kingdom of Yahwe. He sees his conceptions of this destiny about to take shape in history" (Davidson). In that perspective, as we have already seen, the collapse of the allied attack is ignored. The first stage is the Assyrian invasion overwhelming Syria and Ephraim, but passing over into Judah (vii. 17, viii. 4, 7 f.); this is followed by a period of tribulation during which Isaiah and his children are for signs in Israel, and the believing remnant is formed, whose watchword is "God with us" (viii. 16 ff.). But this is not the end; beyond the distress and darkness lies the dawn of the new era of peace and salvation (ix. 1 ff.). The message to Ahaz stops short, as was natural, with the announcement of the fall of his kingdom; but that the hope of the future was in Isaiah's thoughts, and is embraced in the sign given, is not on that account to be denied. The name Immanuel is itself a pledge of divine deliverance; and if there be no reference to the immediate deliverance from the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, it must point forward to a greater deliverance following the judgement and introducing the Messianic age. The reference to the desolation of Syria and Ephraim in *v.* 16 *b* is not inconsistent with this reading of the prophecy (see viii. 4), although the excision of that clause (making *v.* 17 the direct apodosis to 16 *a*) would undoubtedly simplify the problem from the point of view here considered.

(v) Starting from this conception of the prophet's purpose, several interpretations of Immanuel may be thought of. (1) Some have held that he is merely an ideal figure, a sort of personification of the faith of the Remnant which is to inherit the glorious future, just as Isaiah himself and his children were signs of that coming age (viii. 18). On this view it would be most natural to suppose that the *'almah* represents the Jewish community (an opinion adopted by several writers on other grounds), and Immanuel the new generation growing up under the privations caused by the Assyrian invasion. But while it may be possible in this way to attach a meaning to the terms of the prediction, it is difficult to see how a figurative representation of this kind could have served the purpose of a sign to Ahaz. (2) Another explanation that has been proposed is that the birth of the child is not an actual occurrence, but something seen by Isaiah in ecstasy as he stood before the king, and that this vision constitutes the sign (Schmidt). This theory is not altogether without support from the analogy of prophecy (cf. 1 Ki. xxii. 17, 19 ff.); but in any case it leaves open the question who Isaiah conceived the child to be. (3) It is perhaps impossible to push the enquiry further without taking account of certain data outside the present passage. (*a*) If the last words of viii. 8 be rightly read as an apostrophe to Immanuel there can be no doubt that he is a real person, conceived as living in the land under the shadow of the Assyrian dominion. (*b*) Again, if ch. ix. 2—7 belongs to this period of Isaiah's life and to the present collection of prophecies, we cannot hesitate to identify the "Child upon the Throne" of that passage with

the Wonder-child of ch. vii. whose name Immanuel is analysed into the four names of ix. 6. Now both these assumptions are widely contested at present; but perhaps the chief reason for rejecting them would disappear with the acceptance of the Messianic interpretation of vii. 14—16, to which so many indications point. The sign given to Ahaz is, in short, *the birth of the Messiah*, the ideal King of the future, born to his people in the hour of their adversity, sharing their affliction in his youth, and waiting the time when "the government shall be on his shoulder," and the perfect kingdom of God shall be established. In his presence with his people Isaiah sees the pledge at once of judgement on the existing nation and dynasty, and of final redemption for the repentant and believing remnant. It is no objection to this view that the sign did not come to pass. That is true; but neither did the prophecy to which it was attached. Unfulfilled predictions like this are a standing phenomenon of Old Testament prophecy. If the birth of Immanuel had been a sign merely of a particular event in history, it would have been rendered invalid by its failure to realise itself; but being a sign of the final consummation of God's ways with men it belongs to the region of eschatology, and it retains its religious value so long as the ideal to which it points remains an object of faith and aspiration.

(vi) The further question of the identity of the *'almah* resolves itself very largely into another: viz. whether there be an element of tradition in the conception of the Messiah as here presented. It is not absolutely necessary to suppose this. It is conceivable that now for the first time the image of the personal Messiah was flashed on Isaiah's mind, as he faced the anxious and faithless monarch whose refusal of the divine guidance had aroused his indignation. At the same time there are some facts which are more intelligible on the view that the idea is partly drawn from an older eschatology. (*a*) The definite article in "the *'almah*" would be most satisfactorily explained if this were a current designation of the mother of the Messiah, whoever she might be—whether an unknown maiden of the royal house, or a figure purely eschatological, or even a virgin in the strict sense. (*b*) The eating of curd and honey (*v.* 15), if it be a symbol of divine fare, appears to have no immediate significance in its present context, and may be a traditional feature of the conception. Its retention by Isaiah would shew that he regarded Immanuel as in some sense a divine personage. (*c*) The words of Micah v. 3, "until the time when one that beareth hath brought forth," are certainly Messianic. It is commonly supposed that they are an echo of the prophecy in Isaiah, and by many that they were not written by Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah, but by a late editor of his prophecies. In that case they simply prove—what however is of some interest—that Isa. vii. 14 was interpreted messianically in the age to which they belong. But it is more probable, not only that they are a genuine utterance of Micah, but that they are independent of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy; so that both prophets must have drawn upon a common eschatological tradition. The

18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD
shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the
rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of
19 Assyria. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them
in the [1]desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and
upon all thorns, and upon all [2]pastures.
20 In that day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is
hired, *which is* in the parts beyond the River, *even* with the

[1] Or, *rugged* [2] Or, *bushes*

evidence being so uncertain, the theory that the expectation of a Messiah was prevalent in Israel in the age of Isaiah and Micah hardly amounts to more than a surmise; yet the surmise may be such as to relieve the great difficulties which beset the exegesis of this obscure passage.

18—25. Further announcements (not addressed to Ahaz, but probably compiled from fragments of several of Isaiah's prophecies) of the Assyrian invasion (18—20) and its consequences (21—25).

18, 19. Judah, as the theatre of the inevitable duel between Assyria and Egypt for the mastery of Asia, must endure all the horrors of the double invasion. Cf. Hos. ix. 3.

18. *the LORD shall hiss...*] See ch. v. 26. The comparison of the Egyptians to flies and the Assyrians to bees is thoroughly appropriate, Egypt being infested with swarms of flies (xviii. 1), while Assyria was pre-eminently a land of bees. It would seem, however, that the two relative clauses in which the figures are applied to Egypt and Assyria destroy the metrical balance of the verses, and are to be treated as explanatory glosses. Dangerous enemies are compared to bees in Deut. i. 44; Ps. cxviii. 12 (cf. Hom. *Iliad*, II. 86 ff., 469 ff.). *the uttermost part*] (or "end") suggests the Ethiopians, who however did not conquer Egypt till the invasion of Piankhi about B.C. 720 (see Introd. p. xiv). *the rivers* (strictly "Nile-arms") *of Egypt*] The word used is the plu. of an Egyptian name for the Nile.

19. The figure is kept up. *desolate valleys*] rather, **inaccessible ravines** (lit. "valleys of precipices"). *thorns* or **thorn-bushes** only ch. lv. 13.

pastures] Perhaps "watering-places" (?). The word recurs only as the name of a place in Galilee (Jud. i. 30; Josh. xix. 15). These are the places naturally frequented by insects.

20. A new figure for the degradation and impoverishment of Judah at the hands of Assyria.

with a razor...River] Better: **with the razor hired beyond the River** (Euphrates). There may possibly be here an allusion to the "hiring" of Assyria by Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 7 f.); if so the prophecy is almost certainly later than *vv.* 1—17.

king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall 21
nourish a young cow, and two sheep; and it shall come to 22
pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the midst of the land.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place, 23
where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings,

the king of Assyria] see on *v.* 17.

hair of the feet] A euphemism.

and it shall also consume the beard] **and even the beard** (the symbol of manly dignity) **it shall take away.**

21, 22. It is difficult to say whether we have in these verses a picture of pastoral prosperity and plenty or of simplicity and privation. The mention of the abundant yield of milk and of curds and honey as the staple food of the country (see on *v.* 15), points in the former direction; but this is neutralised by the allusions to poverty in *v.* 21 and a sparse population in *v.* 22. It may be true, as Schmidt observes, that a Palestinian peasant of the present day would consider himself extremely well off as the possessor of a cow and two sheep or goats; but would a well-to-do Judean of Isaiah's time have taken the same view? It is certainly easier to read the whole as a partly ironical description of universal poverty than as presenting an ideal of affluent welfare. Nothing is gained by omitting "for the abundance of milk one shall eat curds" (which only leaves us with a *hysteron proteron*), or by deleting (with LXX.) "he shall eat curds, for" (the abundance of milk would not account for the eating of "honey"). The real difficulty seems to us to lie in the use of the phrase "curds and honey," which we have seen (on *v.* 15) to be an almost consecrated synonym for the highest felicity. It is not improbable that the words "for butter and honey shall he eat" are a marginal gloss taken literally from *v.* 15. The verses will then read: "And in that day a man shall keep alive a young cow and a pair of sheep (goats); and because of the abundant production of milk every one shall eat curds who is left in the land."

23—25. The most costly vineyards, requiring the most sedulous cultivation, are overrun by thorns and thistles, cf. ch. v. 6.

23. *a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings*] i.e. "silver shekels." Schrader reckons the silver shekel as equal to about half-a-crown of our money, which would make the price of the vineyard about £125. But the estimate neglects the important element of variation in the purchasing power of money. The Swiss traveller Burckhardt, who found it the custom in Syria to estimate the value of a vineyard according to the number of vines, tells us that good vines are valued at less than three pence each.

24 shall even be for briers and thorns. With arrows and with
bow shall one come thither; because all the land shall be
25 briers and thorns. And all the hills that were digged with
the mattock, [1]thou shalt not come thither for fear of briers
and thorns, but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and
for the treading of sheep.

[1] Or, *where never came the fear of briers and thorns, shall be &c.* Or, *there shall not come thither the fear...but it shall be &c.*

24. *With arrows and with bow*] the weapons of the hunter (Gen. xxvii. 3).

25. *And all the hills...mattock*] **And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with the mattock.** Such hills were the best sites for vineyards (ch. v. 2).

thou shalt not come thither for fear of, &c.] A doubtful rendering. The sudden change to the 2nd pers. sing. is unaccountable, and the use of 2nd pers. to express the indefinite subject ("one") is not in accordance with Hebrew idiom. The words might be taken as a continuation of the relative clause, thus: "And as for...mattock, *whither no fear of thorns, &c. used to come*, it shall be, &c." This is perhaps preferable, but there is reason to suspect corruption of the text.

for the sending forth of oxen] i.e. a place where oxen are sent forth (cf. ch. xxxii. 20). *the treading* (ch. v. 5) *of sheep*] A.V. "lesser cattle," including goats, is more correct (the word שֶׂה is the noun of unity corresponding to צֹאן "flock").

Ch. VIII. 1—18. Further Oracles from the Time of the Syro-Ephraimitish War.

The passage may be analysed as follows:—

i. *vv.* 1—4. The prophet, having utterly failed to influence the policy of the court (ch. vii. 1—17), is directed by Jehovah to impress his divinely inspired view of the situation on the public mind by two significant actions. First, he is to place in some conspicuous position a large tablet bearing in legible characters the ominous inscription LMHRŠLLHŠHBZ; at the same time giving legal formality to the transaction by taking two prominent citizens as witnesses. Then the explanation of the word is given in connexion with the naming of a son born to him soon afterwards. It is a prophecy of the speedy overthrow of Ephraim and Syria by the king of Assyria. These actions are only intelligible at a time when the prediction was contrary to common expectation; hence they were performed *certainly* before the conquest of Damascus (732), and *probably* also before the embassy of Ahaz to Tiglath-pileser (2 Ki. xvi. 7).

8 And the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great tablet, and write upon it [1]with the pen of a man, For

[1] Or, *in common characters*

ii. *vv.* 5—8. A prediction of the Assyrian invasion of Judah. The people who despise the softly flowing waters of Shiloah (the symbol of Jehovah's invisible presence and government) shall be inundated by the waters of the Euphrates (a figure for the might of Assyria).

iii. *vv.* 9, 10. An oracle of very different import from the preceding. In an apostrophe to the nations of the world the prophet announces the frustration of all plans and combinations directed against the sovereign rule of Jehovah on mount Zion.

iv. *vv.* 11—15. Isaiah relates how in an hour of ecstasy he had experienced the strong pressure of the divine hand on his spirit, holding him aloof from the currents of public opinion which flowed around him, and constraining him to regulate his attitude by the constant sense of God's presence in Israel, which is the rock on which the unbelieving nation will inevitably be shattered.

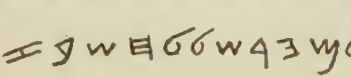
v. *vv.* 16—18. The prophet recognises that a chapter of his ministry has now closed. He is conscious that Jehovah has withdrawn the gracious guidance of the prophetic word which the nation has so emphatically rejected; and therefore he retires within the circle of his own adherents to wait for the fulfilment of his words. To these "disciples" he commits a record of the prophecies delivered during the crisis, while to the unbelieving people Jehovah has given pledges of His word in the names of the prophet and his two children.

It would be a mistake to look for a close logical connexion between these sections. They form a series of detached oracles, which followed each other at intervals like lightning flashes, illuminating for us the darkness of the political situation. Along with ch. vii. 1—17 and probably also ch. vi., they constitute the chief part of the "testimony" which Isaiah "sealed up" among his disciples.

1—4. The twofold sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

1. Comp. ch. xxx. 8; Hab. ii. 2. *a great tablet*] The word *gillāyôn* occurs again only in ch. iii. 23 ("mirrors"). The etymology (from *gālāh*, "reveal") suggests that it here means a **placard** to be posted in a public place, as distinct from *lûăḥ*, the usual name for a tablet.

with the pen of a man] i.e. apparently "in common characters" (marg.), easily legible and understood by the people (Hab. ii. 2). For the expression cf. Deut. iii. 11: "an ordinary cubit." Such a direction bears witness to an extensive knowledge of writing in Isaiah's time. The famous inscription in the Siloam tunnel, belonging probably to this age, is thought to have been carved by the workmen for their amusement. In these characters the inscription would be like this—



2 [1]Maher-shalal-hash-baz; and I will take unto me faithful
witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the
3 son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess;
and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD
4 unto me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before
the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My
mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria
shall be carried away before the king of Assyria.
5 6 And the LORD spake unto me yet again, saying, Foras-
much as this people hath refused the waters of Shiloah that go

[1] That is, *The spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth.*

An allusion by contrast to the cuneiform character as a secret (or divine) script, is possible, but hardly probable.

Maher-shalal-hash-baz] That is, "**Haste-spoil-speed-booty.**" Syntactically the enigmatic legend is capable of more than one construction. Most probably the verbs are participles; and then the nouns may be either nominative to them, or in the accusative of direction. The last seems preferable. We may translate "Hasting to (the) spoil—speeding to (the) booty." (Comp. Goethe's *Raufebold, Habebald, Eilebeute* in the second part of *Faust*.)

For] is usually taken as the common formula of ownership found on old Hebrew seals. But this is not a seal, nor is Maher-shalal-hash-baz as yet a person: it is simply an ominous word, which has sounded in the inner ear of the prophet and is to be blazoned before the public eye.

2. *and I will take, &c.*] Better (with a change of pointing) **and I took me reliable witnesses.** The LXX. and other old versions have the imperative ("and take for me"); but this, as spoken by Jehovah, is less natural. Uriah the priest is mentioned in 2 Ki. xvi. 10 ff.; Zechariah is unknown, although the name occurs in the nearly contemporary notices of 2 Chron. xxvi. 5, xxix. 13. It is not to be inferred that the two men were intimate friends of Isaiah; they are called to witness simply as responsible public persons, trusted by the people. We must suppose that Isaiah actually put up the inscription in some public place, in presence of the two witnesses, who could afterwards certify the date of this singular action.

3. *the prophetess*] Isaiah's wife is so called, not because she herself possessed the prophetic gift, but because the husband's designation is transferred by courtesy to the wife;—as a German might have said "die Frau Prophetin."

4. Only now, at the naming of the child, is the import of the mysterious word disclosed. The term set for the fulfilment would be about a year (from 734). We see that at this time Isaiah expected the fall of the two capitals to be simultaneous.

5—8. The Assyrian invasion of Judah threatened.

6. *the waters of Shiloah*] The *pool* of Siloam (Neh. iii. 15; John

softly, [1]and rejoice [2]in Rezin and Remaliah's son ; now there- 7
fore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the River, strong and many, *even* the king of Assyria and all his glory : and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks : and he shall sweep onward into Judah ; 8

[1] Or, *even them that rejoice* [2] Or, *with*

ix. 7, now called '*Ain Silwân*) was situated on the south-west side of the Temple Mount, at the mouth of the Tyropœon valley. From a very ancient time it has been connected, by a rock-hewn tunnel, with an intermittent spring (St Mary's well) on the opposite (eastern) side of the hill, outside the wall. If this work had been executed before Isaiah's day there could be no reasonable doubt that it is referred to here. The name (from a verb meaning "send" John ix. 7) suggests an artificial channel, and the expression "that go softly" exactly describes the flow of the water along the easy gradient of the tunnel. Its execution, however, is very generally assigned to Hezekiah, on the ground of 2 Ki. xx. 20; 2 Chr. xxxii. 30; Ecclus. xlviii. 17. Whether this or an older external aqueduct be intended, the point of the metaphor is that the waters, flowing "fast by the oracle of God," are a type (not of the Davidic dynasty, but) of the silent unobtrusive presence and majesty of Jehovah, who "dwells in mount Zion" (*v.* 18: cf. Ps. xlvi. 4).

and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son] If the text and translation be right, we must assume either (*a*) that "this people" does not refer to Judah, but to Ephraim or Ephraim and Syria together ; or (*b*) that the people of Judah were secretly disaffected towards the house of David and sympathised with the design of the allied kings. But (*a*) "this people" most naturally means those who had refused the waters of Shiloah, the people amongst whom the prophet was living (as in *vv.* 11, 12), i.e. the inhabitants of Judah ; while (*b*) is a supposition not probable in itself, and at variance with vii. 2, viii. 12. The best explanation is to assume a confusion between two words of similar sound ; and to render "faint before" (*mṣôṣ*) instead of "rejoice in" (*msôs*). But there are grammatical difficulties ; and on the whole we are inclined to regard the clause as a late and mutilated gloss, written under the impression that the waters of Shiloah refer to Rezin and Pekah.

7. *now therefore*] lit. "and therefore," introducing the apodosis.

bringeth up upon them] Not merely North Israel, but Judah, "this people."

the waters of the River] The Euphrates, explained in the next clause as a symbol of the Assyrian power. The figure of the verse is based on the fact that in summer the Euphrates overflows its banks,—an obvious emblem of the aggressive policy of the great world-power.

even *the king...glory*] Another gloss, but this time correct.

8. *and* it *shall sweep onward into Judah*] For the verb, cf. Hab.

he shall overflow and pass through; he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

9 [1]Make an uproar, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye
10 shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought; speak the word, and it shall not
11 stand: for [2]God is with us. For the LORD spake thus to

[1] Or, *Break* According to some ancient authorities, *Associate yourselves.*
[2] Heb. *immanu El*

i. 11. *overflow and pass through*] Rather **flooding and overflowing** (point as inf. abs.) or "in an overflowing flood" (cf. Na. i. 8).

shall reach even to the neck] (cf. xxx. 28). Judah is in the utmost extremity of danger, yet is not wholly submerged.

the stretching out of his wings] "Wings" cannot mean "masses of water branching off from the main current"; nor is there any evidence that the Hebrews spoke of the "wings" of an army, as we do. The figure of the deluge is abruptly changed to that of a huge bird of prey, overshadowing the whole land with its extended wings.

of thy land, O Immanuel] Without any change of the original consonantal text we might read, as at the end of *v.* 10, "...of (the) land. For with us is God!" The change is perhaps required if Immanuel be an ordinary child; but on the view that he is the Messiah, the apostrophe becomes natural. There are therefore no good grounds for the suspicion that the last part may be a gloss introduced from *v.* 10.

9, 10. The challenge of faith to the combined nations of the world. Cf. Ps. ii. 1–6. The oracle resembles ch. xvii. 12–14; and there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of either. Nor need it be questioned that this one stands in its proper connexion here.

9. *Make an uproar*] The rendering "Associate yourselves" (Targ., Vulg., A.V., R.V. marg.) is based on a wrong grammatical analysis (the root being *rā'a'*, not *rā'āh*). A suitable sense is difficult to obtain. LXX. (with דְּעוּ for רֵעוּ) reads "Take knowledge."

and ye shall be broken in pieces] Better, **and be dismayed.**

gird yourselves] for battle against the cause of Jehovah.

10. *Take counsel...nought*] "Resolve on a scheme: it shall be frustrated."

speak a word] i.e. "proclaim your resolution."

for God is with us] See on *v.* 8. Duhm perceives that on his interpretation of Immanuel in ch. vii. 14, these words are here "trivial."

11—15. Isaiah was able to stand alone against the nation during this crisis, because his thoughts were controlled by a Power not his own.

me [1]with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A 12
conspiracy, concerning all whereof this people shall say, A conspiracy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be in dread *thereof*. The LORD of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let 13
him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall 14
be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a

[1] Heb. *with strength of hand.* See Ezek. iii. 14.

11. *with a strong hand*] Better: **while the Hand** (of Jehovah) **grasped** (**me**), (an infinitive construction). The phrase (cf. Ez. iii. 14) refers to an ecstatic experience, in which the true view of the aspects and issue of the situation was borne in upon Isaiah's mind with irresistible force. His mind was as it were fixed in one direction, and he was henceforth proof against the disturbing influences of social opinion around him.

and instructed me ... walk] Or, **and warned me against walking.** Grammatically, the clause is a continuation, not of the main sentence ("Jehovah spake, &c.), but of the infinitive construction, which is here resolved into the consec. Imperfect (point וַיִּסְּרֵנִי). *the way of this people*] the prevailing emotions, thoughts and resolves of the hour.

The sense of the verse might be feebly paraphrased as follows: "For this is the message that came to me from the Lord, in a sudden flash of inspiration which warned me, with constraining power, against being carried away by popular clamour: namely, etc."

12. *A conspiracy*] The word "conspiracy" does not necessarily imply treason within the state. It may be used (as the verb is in Neh. iv. 2) of an external coalition threatening the integrity of the commonwealth. So here the "conspiracy" might be the Syro-Ephraimitish alliance, which Isaiah and his adherents are warned not to treat as a serious danger. But if treason be not implied in the word, it is certainly not excluded; and it is only too likely that there was a party in the city suspected of complicity in the designs of the allies, and that some movement in that quarter had caused the panic cry of Treason! to be raised in the streets.

neither fear ye their fear] i.e. "fear not what they fear," but fear Jehovah alone (*v.* 13).

13. *him shall ye* **count holy**] recognise as the Holy One (xxix. 23). Duhm's bold emendation: "count *Him* the traitor" (תקשירו) commends itself to many as the only satisfying antithesis to the cry of "treason" in *v.* 12. It is largely a matter of exegetical taste. On any view the idea of the verse is that the real danger for Israel does not lie in political schemes and combinations, but in the holy character and immutable purpose of the Lord of hosts (cf. vii. 5 ff.).

14. *he shall* **become** *a sanctuary*] The word *mikdāsh* is difficult. The rendering "holy object" is not justified by usage, and is hardly

rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and
15 for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And [1]many
shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be broken, and be
snared, and be taken.
16 Bind thou up the testimony, seal the [2]law among my

[1] Or, *many among them shall stumble, and fall &c.*
[2] Or, *teaching*

suitable as applied to Jehovah. If we take it in the sense of "asylum"—which is possible, because a sanctuary was in fact an asylum (Ex. xxi. 14; 1 Ki. i. 50, ii. 28, 30)—we introduce a contrast which (apart from the Massoretic accentuation) is indicated by nothing in the text; although it is expressed in the Vulg. (*robis*), and emphasised in the LXX. (κἂν ἐπ' αὐτῷ πεποιθὼς ᾖς, ἔσται σοι εἰς ἁγίασμα, καὶ οὐχ κ.τ.λ.). [The Targ. paraphrases in the opposite sense: "If ye will not receive it, his word shall be among you as a punishment".] Duhm's latest solution is perhaps the best: to substitute *miḳḳōsh*, and take the latter part of the verse as epexegetical of the first clause, thus: **he shall become a snare and a stumbling stone:—a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** The general sense is clear: Jehovah will be a secret and sudden danger to those who walk in blind unbelief.

15. *many* **among them** (as marg.)] Not all; a "Remnant shall turn" and be saved: *how*, is more fully shewn in the next verses. The expressions of this verse are reproduced with little variation in ch. xxviii. 13. They are frequently alluded to in the N.T. (Luke ii. 34; Matt. xxi. 44; Rom. ix. 33).

16—18. The prophet, recognising the failure of his work as regards the nation, prepares a written record of his teaching, and deposits this as a sealed document in the custody of his disciples. By this solemn act he forms an inner circle of religious fellowship, which is the nucleus of the new people of God. See Introd. p. xxxii f.

16. Cf. ch. xxx. 8; Dan. xii. 4. *Bind thou up...seal*] The imperatives can only be understood as a command of Jehovah to Isaiah, as in *vv.* 1 ff. But in the next verse Isaiah himself is the speaker, and since the change of person is exceedingly abrupt, and the expression "my disciples" in the mouth of Jehovah most unnatural, we may conclude that the two verbs are infs. abs. (wrongly vocalised), and translate: (I will) **bind up**...(I will) **seal**. For the sealing of documents in the O.T., see xxix. 11; 1 Ki. xxi. 8; Jer. xxxii. 10 f.; Dan. xii. 4.

the testimony...the law] **testimony**...**instruction** (see on i. 10). Both words seem to be here used of the contents of the revelations communicated to the prophet during these months of danger and anxiety; the former describes more particularly the evidential character of the predictions, the latter refers to the practical element in the revelation (as in vii. 4—9, viii. 11—13).

disciples. And I will wait for the LORD, that hideth his 17
face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.
Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me 18
are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of
hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

among my disciples] i.e. those who had received the prophet's message, and rallied round him as their spiritual guide.

17. *that hideth his face....*] A very common expression for Jehovah's anger: Deut. xxxi. 17 f.; Mic. iii. 4; Jer. xxxiii. 5; Ps. xiii. 1, xliv. 24; Job xiii. 24, &c. The special mark of displeasure which Isaiah has in view is the cessation of those admonitions and warnings which Jehovah had sent through him to the people.

will look for him] Better: **will hope in Him.** The counsel which the nation and the king rejected becomes the rule of the prophet's own life.

18. *I and the children...me*] Like Hosea, Isaiah had been directed to embody leading ideas of his teaching in the names of at least two of his children, *Shear-jashub* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. His own name, also, though not an uncommon one, expresses what we may regard as the most comprehensive idea of his theology—"Jehovah saves." He and they are thus **for signs and portents** (cf. ch. xx. 3 and see on vii. 11) in Israel; the children especially cannot be seen or named without recalling to mind prophetic utterances of profound import.

which dwelleth in mount Zion] It is significant that this conception first emerges in Isaiah's teaching at a time when Jerusalem was threatened by a foreign army. We have here perhaps the earliest suggestion of what became afterwards a fixed principle—the inviolability of Jerusalem, the earthly seat of Jehovah's government.

CH. VIII. 19.—IX. 1. ESOTERIC PROPHECIES ADDRESSED TO ISAIAH'S DISCIPLES.

The text of this section is so ill preserved that it is impossible to tell whether it has any connexion with what precedes or not. We can distinguish (1) a mutilated prose fragment (*vv.* 19, 20) containing a warning against necromancy, such as might *conceivably* have been addressed by Isaiah to his "disciples" in view of the suspension of his prophetic activity recorded in *vv.* 16—18 (cf. *v.* 20 *a*, with *v.* 16 *a*). (2) A poetic fragment (21, 22) picturing with singular vividness a solitary figure wandering through a desolate and darkened land, maddened with hunger and despair: this too *might* be an oracle of Isaiah's, belonging to the same period. (3) A promise of a glorious future for the region in the north and east of Palestine (ix. 1 [Heb. viii. 23]). If this be from Isaiah, it is natural to connect it with the expedition of Tiglath-pileser IV, *c.* 734 (see on the *v.*). But it has all the appearance of having been written to supply a transition from the darkness of 21 f.

19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that
have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and
that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? on
20 behalf of the living *should they seek* unto the dead? To the
[1]law and to the testimony! [2]if they speak not according to

[1] Or, *teaching*
[2] Or, *surely according to this word shall they speak, for whom there is no morning*

to the "great light" of ix. 2 ff.; and in that case is not likely to be the work of Isaiah.

19, 20. Religion and superstition contrasted.

19. *And when they* (the infatuated, God-forsaken people) *shall say unto you* (believers in divine revelation).

them that have familiar spirits] Heb. simply *hā'ôbhôth*. Strictly, the *'ôbh* is the "familiar spirit" itself (Lev. xx. 27, &c.), the disembodied spirit after death; the necromancer or "medium" through whom it holds communication with the living is *ba'al 'ôbh* or *ba'ălath 'ôbh* (1 Sam. xxviii. 8)—the possessor of an *'ôbh*.

wizards, that chirp and that mutter] "Wizards," lit. "knowing ones," practitioners of an occult science. *chirp and mutter* refer to the faint voice, like that of a little bird, which antiquity ascribed to the shades of the departed: "The sheeted dead did *squeak* and *gibber* in the streets of Rome." See ch. xxix. 4, where the word *chirp* (R.V. "whisper") is again used, and comp. *Aen.* VI. 492 f.; *Il.* XXIII. 101. The LXX. (*τοὺς ἐνγαστριμύθους...τοὺς κενολογοῦντας οἱ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας φωνοῦσιν*) suggests that the voice of the ghost was imitated by ventriloquism, which is not unlikely.

should not a people...God?] This seems to be the answer which the prophet's disciples are to return to the people. It is in every way less natural to take it as continuing the solicitations to unlawful rites (rendering "gods").

on behalf of the living...dead] i.e. "should one enquire of the dead (ghost) on behalf of living men?"

20. *To the law and to the testimony!*] See on *v.* 16. If there be a connexion between the expressions there and here, we may take this exclamation as Isaiah's, reminding his disciples that they have already among them a "sure word of prophecy" unfolding the future so far as God has been pleased to reveal it.

The remainder of the verse is hopelessly obscure. The last clause **for whom** (or which) **there is no dawn** probably belongs to what follows; and then it is impossible to choose between the renderings *if they speak not...* (R.V.) and "surely they shall speak" (marg.). In the one case *this word* refers to the first sentence of *v.* 20; in the other, to *v.* 19.

21, 22. Another scene, representing the utter desolation of the land, and the physical and spiritual distress of the survivors.

this word, surely there is no morning for them. And they 21
shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it
shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they
shall fret themselves, and [1]curse by their king and by their
God, and turn their faces upward: and they shall look unto 22
the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of
anguish; [2]and [3]into thick darkness *they shall be* driven
away. [4]But there shall be no gloom to her that was in 9

[1] Or, *curse their king and their God*
[2] Or, *and thick darkness shall be driven away: for there &c.*
[3] Or, *in* [4] Or, *For*

21. he *shall pass through it*] Obviously, the land; but something must have fallen out before this verse, to account for the reference of the pronoun. Throughout this and the following verse, "they," "their," "themselves," should be "he," "his," "himself." The subject is either the whole nation or an individual Israelite—(the last man?). He wanders through the land, perhaps seeking an oracle (Am. viii. 11—13).

they shall fret themselves] Better: **he shall break out in anger** (the form is used only here).

curse **his** *king and* **his** *God*] Not "his king and God" (whether Jehovah or a false god); but the king because he cannot, and God because He will not, help. Cf. 2 Ki. vi. 26 f. (see also 1 Ki. xxi. 10). For the idea comp. Rev. xvi. 11, 21.

22. The last words of the previous verse should be taken along with this one: **and he shall turn** (his gaze) **upward, and shall look to the earth: and behold,** &c. Whether he look to heaven or earth, no ray of hope shall appear (cf. ch. v. 30).

distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish] The word here translated "gloom" is slightly different in form from that in ix. 1, and neither occurs again.

and into...driven away] **and he shall be chased into thick darkness**: comp. Jer. xxiii. 12. Less acceptable translations are: "and darkness shall be driven (upon him)"; or "but (the) darkness shall be dispelled."

IX. **1** [Heb. viii. 23]. *But...anguish*] Lit. **For (there is) no gloom to her that (is) in straitness.** The sentence is an enigma. Duhm translates it as a question, and regards it as the gloss of a reader who wished to point out that the "gloom" of *v.* 22 is metaphorical, and justified his conclusion thus: "For is there not gloom to (a land) that is in straits?" It is a nice question whether the ancient scholiast or the modern commentator displays the greater subtlety here. But it is impossible to extract from the text a sense which would have a meaning in the connexion. The rendering of R.V. is condemned by its arbitrary change of tense in the two members.

anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea,
2 beyond Jordan, [1]Galilee of the nations. The people that

[1] Or, *the district*

In the former time he brought...but in the latter time] The subject is Jehovah. The opening is abrupt, even for a transition verse. A somewhat easier, and not impossible rendering would be: "As the former time brought...so the latter, &c."

brought into contempt...made it glorious] Or (since the words for "land" have the acc. termination), "brought contempt on the land... brought honour to it."

the land of Zebulun...Naphtali] Lower and Upper Galilee.

by the way of the sea] either "in the direction of the (Mediterranean) Sea," or "the region along the West side of the Sea of Gennesareth." In the time of the Crusades *Via Maris* was the name of the road leading from Acre to Damascus, and this may be the reference here.

beyond Jordan] the land of Gilead (2 Ki. xv. 29).

Galilee of the nations] **the circuit of the nations.** Although the Hebrew word (*Gālîl*) is the origin of the later "Galilee," the district to which it was applied in the O.T. was only the northernmost corner of what was afterwards Upper Galilee (see 1 Ki. ix. 11; Josh. xx. 7, xxi. 32; 2 Ki. xv. 29).

If the verse was written by a contemporary of Isaiah (which, of course, is very doubtful) these remote provinces are singled out for special mention as the first to be depopulated by Tiglath-pileser in 734 (2 Ki. xv. 29), those parts of the land, therefore, on which the reproach of foreign dominion will have lain longest when the Deliverance comes. If it be of much later date we may compare a passage like Zec. x. 10, where a desire is expressed for a re-peopling of the outlying districts of Palestine from the Diaspora (Duhm). The prophecy acquired a new and surprising significance when the "good news of the Kingdom" began to be proclaimed by our Lord first in Galilee (Matt. iv. 13 ff). The following verses (2—7) refer of course to the whole nation.

Ch. IX. 2—7 (Heb. 1—6). The Advent of the Messianic King.

In a strain of rapturous poetry the prophet, transported into the future, sings of the great salvation to which he confidently looks forward for his people. The poem falls naturally into four strophes; the lines are of very unequal length, but the number of lines was probably the same in each strophe: either ten (Duhm) or eight (Gray).

i. The light and joy of the Deliverance (*vv.* 2, 3).

ii. The manner of the Deliverance,—the overthrow of the Assyrian tyranny (*vv.* 4, 5).

walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the [1]shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, [2]thou hast 3

[1] Or, *deep darkness*
[2] Another reading is, *thou didst not increase the joy.*

iii. The Epiphany of the Messiah (*v.* 6).
iv. The eternal duration of the Messiah's righteous rule (*v.* 7).

The arguments urged by many recent critics against the genuineness of this prophecy are neither singly nor cumulatively of much weight. The linguistic evidence is admittedly indecisive. The absence of any allusion to the passage in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah is no more surprising than their indifference to the characteristically Isaianic formulation of the doctrine of the Remnant. The conception of Jehovah's "jealousy" as working *in favour of* the future Israel (*v.* 7) is entirely consistent both with Isaiah's general teaching, and with the pre-exilic usage of the word (1 Ki. xix. 10, 14). It is futile to object that the passage presupposes the subjugation of Judah and the fall of the Davidic dynasty; for it equally presupposes, from its ideal standpoint, the birth of the Messiah, which was certainly still in the future. And to say, lastly, that the Messiah, as here pourtrayed, is a political figure without direct significance for religion is to make a distinction where Isaiah saw none: religion realising itself in political institutions is the very core of his prophetic thinking.

To prove that no one but Isaiah could have written the verses is, of course, impossible; but there are substantial grounds for believing that he not only wrote them but placed them at the close of the record of his activity during the Syro-Ephraimitish crisis. At least if we accept the Messianic interpretation of ch. vii. 14 ff., we can hardly fail to identify the royal Child of ix. 6 with the Wonder-child of the earlier oracle; and when we observe how the word Immanuel was the prophet's watchword throughout that critical time, we are prepared to agree with Whitehouse that "some such ideal portraiture was needed to give completeness to the Immanuel prophecy." We venture, therefore, to date the prophecy about 734 or 733 B.C.

2, 3. First strophe. The darkness of oppression and sorrow is suddenly dispelled by the shining of a great light, hailed with shouts of rejoicing by an emancipated nation.

2. *have seen*] the perfects throughout are those of prophetic certainty; the writer is transported into the future.

a great light] For light as an emblem of salvation or deliverance, cf. lviii. 8, 10, lix. 9; Mic. vii. 8 f.; Ps. xviii. 28, &c.

the shadow of death] Heb. *zal-māveth*, usually held by scholars to be a corruption of *zalmûth* (="shadow" simply). But the traditional etymology is forcibly defended by Nöldeke in *Zeitschr. f. d. A. T. Wiss.*, 1897, pp. 183 f.

increased their joy: they joy before thee according to the
joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken as in the day of
5 Midian. For [1]all the armour of the armed man in the tumult,

[1] Or, *every boot of the booted warrior*

3. *thou hast increased their joy*] This is the reading of the *Qĕrê*: the consonantal text gives the wholly unsuitable sense, "thou hast not increased the joy" (so A.V.). *Lō'*, "not" and *lô*, "to it," being pronounced alike, are sometimes confused in the text of the O.T. But the corruption here lies deeper. We must adopt a very simple emendation, approved by all expositors (הגוילא for הגילה) and translate: **Thou hast multiplied the exultation; thou hast increased the joy.**

before thee] as at the festivals in the sanctuary, a phrase often used in Deuteronomy (xii. 7, xiv. 26, &c.).

the joy in harvest] Ps. iv. 8, cxxvi. 5, 6.

as men rejoice when they divide the spoil] cf. ch. xxxiii. 23; Jud. v. 30; Ps. cxix. 162. For "rejoice" read **exult.**

4, 5. Second strophe. The destruction of the oppressor, and the cessation of war.

4. *the yoke of his burden*] i.e. his irksome yoke.

the staff of his shoulder] means the staff with which his shoulder was beaten, the pronouns referring to Israel. Instead of "staff" (מטה) some would read "collar" (מטה),—strictly the wooden bars descending from the yoke (על) and enclosing the animal's neck. But there is little call for emendation.

rod of his oppressor] **task-master**, as in Ex. v. 6.

the day of Midian] when the dominion of the Midianites was for ever broken (Jud. vii.; cf. Is. x. 26). "Day" here means "fateful day," as in Hos. i. 11; Ezek. xxx. 9; Ps. cxxxvii. 7.

5. *For all the armour...tumult*] The chief difficulty here is the word for "armour" (סְאוֹן) and the denominative (סֹאֵן) by which it is immediately followed. There can be no reasonable doubt that *ṣ'ôn* is the equivalent of Ass. *shênu* and Aram. *ṣîna*, which mean simply "shoe." That it means specifically a heavy military boot, such as was worn by Greek and Roman soldiery in later times, does not seem capable of proof. Hence the following *ṣô'ēn* can fairly mean no more than "shoe-wearer" or "shod." The best translation, therefore, would be **For every shoe worn in tumult** (of battle). See Gray's note, p. 170 f., and the reff. there. But it is very curious, as Gray remarks, that this insignificant item of the soldier's attire, and not his weapons, is selected for special mention. The only reason that can be suggested is that every vestige of war shall be burned up in preparation for the

and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning,
for fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is 6
given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and
his name shall be called [1]Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,

[1] Or, *Wonderful counsellor*

kingdom of universal peace. Comp. the burning of the weapons of Gog's host in Ez. xxxix. 9 f.

rolled in blood] Or, with a slight alteration, "stained with blood" (Gray).

6. Third strophe: the Child upon the Throne. The last and greatest cause of joy is the birth of the Messiah, and his wonderful personality and government. When Isaiah expected the event to take place, cannot be gathered from this prophecy. There is no reason for supposing that the reference is to a child already born (Hezekiah); the perfect tense is used, as throughout the passage, from the ideal standpoint of the writer, which is within the Messianic age.

6. *unto us*] the survivors of the judgement. Cf. "Immanuel," "God with *us*."

the government] This word is found only here and in *v.* 7, and is of uncertain interpretation, perhaps "princedom" (from *sar* "prince").

his name shall be called] The fourfold name of the Messiah consists of a series of honorific titles, pertaining to Him in His kingly capacity and expressing mainly the divine qualities displayed in His government. These are: Counsel, Might, Fatherhood, Peace. The names may fairly be considered an expansion of the single name Immanuel (Davidson). We may compare, with Guthe and others, the high-sounding titles assumed by Egyptian and Babylonian monarchs in their inscriptions, such as, "Giver of Life in perpetuity," "Ever Living," "Lord of Life," "Lord of Eternity and Infinity," &c.

Wonderful, Counsellor] Since each of the other names is compounded of two words, these expressions are also to be taken together as forming a single designation —**Wonder-Counsellor.** The construction is either construct followed by genitive—"a wonder of a Counsellor" (cf. Gen. xvi. 12), or acc. governed by participle—"one who counsels wonderful things." Cf. "wonderful in counsel" (of Jehovah) in ch. xxviii. 29. On counsel as the function of a king, see Mic. iv. 9.

Mighty God] *êl Gibbôr* either "God-like Hero" or **Hero-God.** The second is to be preferred, because the title is applied to Jehovah in ch. x. 21 (cf. Deut. x. 7; Jer. xxxii. 18). These two titles ascribe to the Messiah the two fundamental virtues of a ruler, wisdom and strength (cf. ch. xi. 2), both in superhuman measure. The predicate of divinity (like that of eternity in the next name) is not to be understood in the absolute metaphysical sense; it means that divine energy resides in him and is displayed in his rule (cf. xi. 2 ff.; Mi. v. 4; Zech. xii. 8). The Messiah may be a superhuman Personage—a demi-god; but not

7 [1]Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this.

[1] Heb. *Father of Eternity.*

Jehovah incarnate. See Introd., p. lxvi f. In the fulfilment, the words receive a larger sense.

The remaining two titles describe the character of the Messiah's government, as (*a*) paternal, and (*b*) peaceful.

Everlasting Father] lit. "Father of Eternity." The translation "Father of booty" is admissible so far as the second term is concerned (see ch. xxxiii. 23; Gen. xlix. 27), but the ideas of fatherhood and booty form an unnatural association, and the Arabic use of *'abû* to denote possession is not Hebrew. "Father of Eternity" describes the king, not as "possessor of the attribute of eternity," but as one who for ever acts as a father to his people. **Father for ever**, therefore, expresses the sense.

Prince of Peace] Cf. ch. ii. 2—4, xi. 4 ff.; Mic. v. 5; Zech. ix. 10.

7. Fourth strophe. The extension and consolidation of the Messiah's rule.

Of the increase...end] Rather, "For the increase of authority and for peace without end," &c. The final M (ם) in the middle of the Heb. word for "of the increase" points to some confusion of text, which can also be traced in the translation of the LXX. It is thought to have arisen through dittography of the last two letters of *v.* 6 (שלם : לם); *v.* 7 would then begin with the word רַבָּה: **increased is authority, and endless the peace.** But the *Qĕrê* gives a good sense, though not a very good opening for a strophe.

upon the throne...kingdom] The Messiah succeeds to David's throne and is doubtless conceived as his descendant.

to establish it, and to **support** *it*] The throne is "established" (Prov. xx. 28) and "supported" (Isa. xvi. 5), not by force and conquest, but by the moral qualities of **judgement and righteousness** (see ch. i. 21) in the government.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this] exactly as ch. xxxvii. 32. The word "zeal" or "jealousy" is used of *passion* in a variety of senses, but chiefly with the implied idea of *resentment*. When applied to Jehovah it appears to express the reaction of His holiness called forth by some injury to His honour. Perhaps the closest parallel to the idea here is Zech. i. 14, viii. 2 "I am jealous *for Zion* with a great jealousy."

Ch. IX. 8—X. 4 (+V. 25—30).

Jehovah's Hand stretched out in Wrath over His People. An Oracle against North Israel.

The key-note of the prophecy is given in the recurrent refrain—ix. 12, 17, 21, [x. 4], v. 25. (On the reasons for including ch. v. 25—30 see on that passage.) It is the most artistically arranged of all Isaiah's writings, and may be divided into strophes as follows:—

(i) Ch. ix. 8—10 [Heb. 7—9]. The Prelude explains that the oracle concerns the inhabitants of Samaria, and points to the buoyant assurance and self-confidence which was the habitual temper of the Northern Kingdom.

(ii) Ch. v. 25. Jehovah raises His hand in anger, to descend in blow after blow on the blindly impenitent nation: first of all in an earthquake which fills the streets of its cities with dead bodies.

(iii) Ch. ix. 11, 12 [10, 11]. The second stroke is the ravaging of Israel's territory by its vindictive neighbours on the East and the West.

(iv) *vv.* 13—17 [12—16]. A third blow descends on the obdurate nation in some sudden disaster by which the state is bereft of its leaders, great and small (13—16); the condition of the people is then seen to be utterly corrupt, so that Jehovah withdraws His compassion even from the helpless widows and orphans (17). [Part of this strophe is interpolated.]

(v) *vv.* 18—21 [17—20]. The fourth visitation is a state of anarchy and civil discord, which is described in a succession of powerful and telling images. The nation is rent by the conflict of rival factions, and brought to the verge of dissolution.

[Ch. x. 1—4. A "Woe" on the maladministration of the judges, which is considered by many to be the penultimate strophe of the poem. Against this view see p. 90.]

(vi) Ch. v. 26—29 (30). The prediction of the Assyrian invasion forms, as has been already explained, the *dénouement* of this great drama of judgement. (For the exegesis, see on the passage above, pp. 42-44.) The refrain is of course dropped; Jehovah's wrath is stayed, His hand is no longer stretched forth.

The above arrangement is exposed to the objection that it violates the symmetry of the composition by breaking up the fairly regular strophic division marked by the refrain. But (*a*) we are not entitled to assume that the original strophes were equal. (*b*) When the interpolated lines are removed from *vv.* 13—17, we are left in any case with a very short strophe. (*c*) It is possible that the refrain has fallen out after *v.* 18, and that this *v.* formed a strophe by itself. (*d*) In *vv.* 19—21 the text is perhaps overloaded with additions, and might with advantage be reduced to four distichs. We should then have five nearly equal strophes of three or four distichs; and that the closing strophe should be about double the length of the others is in no way surprising.

8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted
9 upon Israel. And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim
and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in pride and in
10 stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen, but we will build

It is assumed in the foregoing analysis that the passage (down to the end of ch. ix.) is a *retrospect* of historical judgements: and this is the view naturally suggested by the tenses of the original, which are with few exceptions perfects, or the equivalents of perfects (see Gray's note, p. 181). A majority of commentators, taking the perfects as those of prophetic certainty, interpret the oracle as an ideal delineation of the stages of a judgement yet to come. And it is perhaps conceivable that the prophet might assume an ideal standpoint on the eve of the Assyrian invasion, regarding the preliminary chastisements as past, although they were in reality still future at the time of writing. But such a lavish and continuous use of the prophetic perfect would be as unique in the O.T. as the point of view presupposed by it is unnatural; the change to the impf. at v. 26 being too marked to be explained on this hypothesis. It is, therefore, necessary to hold that in ix. 8—21 the references are to past events, although it may not be possible in every case to specify the exact circumstances that are meant. A shorter oracle arranged on the principle here supposed is found in Am. iv. 6—12.

The prophecy must have been composed before the outbreak of the Syro-Ephraimitish war. A later date is excluded by the fact that the issues of that expedition, so disastrous to the Northern Kingdom, are not mentioned. The Assyrians, moreover, are described in terms so vaguely poetic as to suggest that they were as yet unknown to the people of Jerusalem at close quarters. Syria also is mentioned as the enemy of Israel, without any hint of an alliance between them. A nearer determination of date is impossible; but the passage may at least be confidently regarded as a product of the earliest period of Isaiah's ministry.

8—10. The introduction to the prophecy.

8. Translate: **A word hath the Lord sent forth against Jacob and it shall light upon Israel.** "The Word is in nature and history the messenger of the Lord" (Del.); cf. Ps. cvii. 20, cxlvii. 15, 18; Is. lv. 11. The "word" here is the threat of extermination, which has already been "sent forth" and will "light" (cf. Dan. iv. 31) on Israel, bringing about its own fulfilment.

Jacob.. Israel] here denote the Northern Kingdom, as is plain from the next verse.

9. *shall know*] i.e. by its effects, as expanded in the following passage (Hos. ix. 7).

that say] lit. "saying" (inf.) i.e. "as follows." Since this cannot be the continuation of "shall know," a verb (if not a whole line) must have dropped out; [**who boast...**] **in pride and stoutness of heart saying.**

with hewn stone: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. Therefore the LORD [1]shall set up 11
on high against him the adversaries of Rezin, and [2]shall
[3]stir up his enemies; the Syrians [4]before, and the Philis- 12
tines [5]behind; and they [6]shall devour Israel with open
mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his
hand is stretched out still.

[1] Or, *hath set*
[2] Or, *hath stirred*
[3] Or, *join together* Or, *arm*
[4] Or, *on the east*
[5] Or, *on the west*
[6] Or, *have devoured*

10. It has been conjectured that these words are a fragment of a drinking song actually sung in Ephraim. They express the spirit of bravado which prevailed in the northern capital; cf. Am. vi. 13; Hos. vii. 9, 10. It is not necessary to refer them to any particular recent reverses. From the time of the Syrian wars there had been abundant "occasion to use this proverb in Israel."

hewn stone] Cf. Am. v. 11.

sycomores] The wood of the mulberry-fig, spongy but exceedingly durable, is still the cheapest and commonest building material in Palestine, cf. 1 Ki. x. 27.

Here we insert ch. v. 25, which speaks of the kindling of Jehovah's wrath, and the first uplifting of His hand: see p. 42 f.

11, 12. The second blow of Jehovah's hand—ravages on Israel's territory.

11. *Therefore the LORD shall set up*] Transl. **And Jehovah exalted.** The *adversaries of Rezin* must, if the text were correct, denote the Assyrians. But this is not a natural designation (especially if the prophecy was written *before* the Syro-Ephraimitish coalition); and it is inconsistent with *v.* 12. Several codd. read "princes of Rezin"; but this is hardly less objectionable. It is necessary to delete "Rezin" as a gloss and read simply **his** (Israel's) **adversaries.**

and **stirred up** *his enemies*] (frequentative impf.) cf. ch. xix. 2.

12. *the Syrians behind...*] Or, **Syria on the East and the Philistines on the West** (see marg.).

and they shall devour] **and they devoured.**

There is no historic record of Philistine aggression on the kingdom of Ephraim (at least since 1 Ki. xv. 27); nor is there any mention of a Syrian attack about the time when this passage was written. But such border raids are not unlikely to have taken place in the troubled period that followed the death of Jeroboam II.

For all this...stretched out still] "One of the most effective refrain-verses that have ever been composed" (Duhm). The figure of Jehovah, with His arm stretched out in wrath, is kept before the mind of the reader, as the prophecy advances to its conclusion.

13 Yet the people hath not turned unto him that smote
14 them, neither have they sought the LORD of hosts. There-
fore the LORD [1]will cut off from Israel head and tail, palm-
15 branch and rush, in one day. The [2]ancient and the
honourable man, he is the head; and the prophet that
16 teacheth lies, he is the tail. For they that lead this people
cause them to err; and they that are led of them are
17 [3]destroyed. Therefore the Lord shall not rejoice over their
young men, neither shall he have compassion on their
fatherless and widows: for every one is profane and an
evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his
anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

[1] Or, *hath cut* [2] Or, *elder* [3] Heb. *swallowed up.*

13—17. Fourth strophe. It describes a day of disaster (whether a battle or a revolution) in which high and low were suddenly cut off. What incident is referred to cannot be determined with certainty. Royal assassinations were frequent after the death of Jeroboam II (see 2 Ki. xv. 10, 14, 25, and the graphic, though obscure, description of a conspiracy in Hos. vii. 3—7). An event of this kind, followed by indiscriminate massacre, would satisfy the terms of *v.* 14; and the rest of the strophe is of doubtful genuineness.

13. *Yet the people* **turned not**] Am. iv. 6, 8, 11; Hos. vii. 10. *him that smote them*] Cf. Hos. vi. 1.

14. Render: **And (so) Jehovah cut off from Israel**, &c. *head and tail*] i.e. leader and follower or high and low, a proverbial expression, like the next phrase. Cf. xix. 15; Deut. xxviii. 13, 44.

15 is an erroneous explanation of *v.* 14 and therefore a gloss. The prosaic character of the sentence, its borrowed phraseology, and its unreal interpretation of the preceding verse, combine to shew that it is no part of the original poem.

The ancient...honourable] see on iii. 2, 3.

16. Render: **And the leaders of this people have become misleaders, and its led are swallowed up**: another interpolated verse (probably from the same hand as *v.* 15), based on iii. 12.

17. A sentence of utter rejection. The unwonted severity of the threat against the widows and orphans is in striking contrast to the characteristic teaching of the prophets and of Isaiah himself (i. 17). It signifies the complete withdrawal of Jehovah's compassion, on account of the hopeless moral corruption of the nation. But the verse seems a continuation of the interpolated *vv.* 15 f., rather than of *v.* 14.

profane] "irreligious." Cf. ch. x. 6, xxxii. 6, xxxiii. 14; Job viii. 13; Ps. xxxv. 16.

every mouth speaketh folly] ch. xxxii. 6 ("villany" R.V.). In the O.T. folly and wickedness are practically synonymous.

For wickedness burneth as the fire; it devoureth the briers 18
and thorns: yea, it kindleth in the thickets of the forest,
and they roll upward in thick clouds of smoke. Through 19
the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land [1]burnt up: the
people also are as the fuel of fire; no man spareth his
brother. And one shall snatch on the right hand, and be 20
hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall
not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his
own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: 21

[1] Or, *darkened*

18—21. Fifth strophe. As in ch. iii. 1—7, the removal of the pillars of the state is followed by wild confusion and civil war. The state of things alluded to can be partly realised from passages in the book of Hosea, e.g. iv. 1, v. 11 f., vi. 8 f., vii. 7, x. 3, 13; and cf. 2 Ki. xv. 23—25.

18. The smouldering embers of wickedness burst out in a raging fire: see Hosea's image of the oven, vii. 4, 6.

For wickedness...thickets] Render (noting the tenses), **For wickedness burned like a fire that consumes thorns and thistles; and it set fire to the thickets**, &c., cf. x. 17, 18. Both wickedness and the punishment of it are likened to an unquenchable fire; Job xxxi. 12; Deut. xxxii. 22. First the thorns and thistles are kindled, then the fire catches the trees.

and they **rolled** *upward in* **a pillar** *of smoke*] lit. "a lifting up of smoke." The word for "roll upward" does not occur again; it contains an alliteration with that for "thickets."

19. *burnt up*] The word is not found elsewhere, and the sense is altogether uncertain. Some, with a change of text (נִתְעָה for נֹעַתָם: Marti), take it to mean "went wild"; which is certainly a suitable introduction to what follows. There seems, indeed, to be a change of subject in *v.* 19; and it is a question whether the refrain may not have dropped out after *v.* 18.

the people...fuel of fire] Adopting, with most recent commentators, a bold emendation of Duhm (כְּמוֹ אֹכְלֵי אִישׁ), we read: **and the people became like man-eaters** (cannibals).

20. And one snatched on the right hand and was hungry (still) **and devoured on the left hand and they were not satisfied**, &c.

every man...arm] The image would be that of men maddened with hunger and gnawing their own flesh. But the omission of a single letter gives the sense, **every man the flesh of his neighbour**, as we actually read in Jer. xix. 9. This text is demanded by the construction of the next verse. It is the "cruelty of rival factions" that is described.

21. *Manasseh, Ephraim ... Manasseh*] Ancient tribal jealousies

and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

10 Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to
2 the writers that write perverseness: to turn aside the needy from judgement, and to take away the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their spoil, and that they

might naturally be revived in a period of anarchy and civil war. But Manasseh and Ephraim are perhaps used here of the people E. and W. of the Jordan respectively: comp. the account of the accession of the usurper Pekah, who murdered Pekahiah, at the head of a band of fifty Gileadites (2 Ki. xv. 25).

and they...Judah] The clause is justly suspected of being an addition by a reader who remembered the Syro-Ephraimite war. In a historical retrospect it could only refer to that event; and this is excluded by *v.* 12. And even if the whole passage were prophetic, such a climax would only mar the picture of internecine strife in the Northern Kingdom.

X. **1—4**. Both in substance and form this section, apart from the refrain in *v.* 4, is utterly unlike the strophes of the preceding poem. As directly addressed to a *special class* in *Judah* ("my people," *v.* 2) it is out of place in a prophecy describing a series of judgements on the *whole* nation of *Ephraim*; and as an announcement of the final catastrophe (*v.* 3), it would by anticipation spoil the dramatic effect of the concluding strophe (v. 26—29). We agree therefore with those critics who regard it as an isolated oracle of Isaiah, put here by an editor who felt the want of a peroration to ix. 8—21 (after v. 25 ff. had been detached), and who somewhat thoughtlessly repeated the refrain at the end. The passage has close affinities with the "Woes" of v. 8—24 (note the introductory *Hôi*), although it may not be possible to assign it a place in that series.

1. *that decree unrighteous decrees, &c.*] Better, **that draw up mischievous ordinances and are continually scribbling hardship.** The magnates are addressed not as judges but as legislators; their offence is that they embody injustice in arbitrary written enactments, which enable them to perpetrate the most grievous wrongs under legal forms. Cf. Ps. xciv. 20: "which frameth mischief by statute"; and the striking complaint of the English peasants in the rising of 1381: "that parchment being scribbled o'er should undo a man" (Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, p. 218).

and to the writers, &c.] The construction is peculiar. The intensive form of the verb 'to write' occurs only here.

2. The effect and real purpose of this legislative activity.

to turn aside the needy from judgement] See on ch. i. 23.

my people] as iii. 12, 15.

may make the fatherless their prey! And what will ye do 3
in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall
come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where
will ye leave your glory? [1]They shall only bow down 4
under the prisoners, and shall fall under the slain. For all

[1] Or, *Without me they shall bow down &c.*

3. The unjust lawgivers are reminded that there is a day of reckoning, when they must answer to the Supreme Judge.

And what will ye do?] cf. Hos. ix. 5. *day of visitation*] cf. Hos. ix. 7; Mic. vii. 4; Jer. xi. 23, xxiii. 12, &c.

desolation] or, **storm**; the word is only employed here by Isaiah. The "storm" of invasion "comes from far"; cf. ch. v. 26, xxx. 27. We see from Jer. xxiii. 23 f. how this conception of the *distance* of Jehovah expanded into the idea of his *omnipresence*.

leave your glory] i.e. "your wealth"; Gen. xxxi. 1; Is. lxi. 6, lxvi. 12.

4. *They shall...slain*] This clause is hopelessly corrupt; and none of the proposed restorations or renderings is acceptable. An ingenious conjecture of Lagarde's gives the sense "Beltis (= Isis) crouches, Osiris is broken (בֶּלְתִּי כֹּרַעַת חַת אֹסִיר; cf. xlvi. 1; Jer. l. 2), they fall, &c.": i.e. the heathen gods shall be unable to give protection to their votaries. But there is no evidence that Egyptian deities were worshipped in Israel or Judah in Isaiah's time, nor is it natural to think that they should be so unexpectedly referred to here.

Ch. X. 5—34.

The Judgement of the World-Power. A series of Oracles against Assyria.

These oracles contain the clearest, and perhaps (in *vv.* 5—19) the earliest, exposition of that conception of the divine issue of history which was the guiding principle of the latest period of Isaiah's ministry. The leading idea is the contrast between the mission assigned to Assyria in the scheme of Jehovah's Providence, and the ambitious policy of universal dominion cherished by the rulers of that Empire. Assyria was the instrument chosen by Jehovah to manifest His sole deity by the extinction of all the nationalities that put their trust in false gods. But the world-power, intoxicated by its success, and attributing this to its own wisdom and resource, recognises no difference between Jehovah and other gods, but confidently reckons on proving His impotence by the subjugation of His land and people. Hence it becomes necessary for Jehovah to vindicate His supreme Godhead by the destruction of the power which has thus impiously transgressed the limits of its providential commission. And this judgement will take place at the very

moment when Assyria seeks to crown its career of conquest by an assault on Jehovah's sanctuary on Mount Zion, the earthly seat of His government (*vv.* 28—34). This, as we know, was the faith that sustained Isaiah's courage in the crisis of Sennacherib's invasion ; and it is expressed here in four separate oracles which, while they do not form a literary unity, nevertheless reflect aspects of one situation, and must all have been composed within a relatively short period of time.

The most important section is *vv.* 5—19. When was it written? Certainly between the years 717 and 701. The superior limit is given by the list of captured cities in *v.* 9. Carchemish, the latest conquest there mentioned, was incorporated in the Assyrian Empire (although, to be sure, it had been captured more than once previously) in 717, about five years after the fall of Samaria. The lower limit is of course the great invasion of 701. But whether the oracle was uttered near the beginning or end of that period is a question difficult to decide. The opinion that it belongs to a time not long after the destruction of Samaria has a good deal of plausibility. The overthrow of the greater portion of Jehovah's people must have excited the greatest consternation in Judah, and led to anxious questionings as to where this seemingly irresistible tide of invasion was to end. This would be a suitable occasion for the publication of a prophetic oracle on the true function of Assyria in Jehovah's counsel, and the impassable limit to its power. We may suppose also that Isaiah's closer observation of the tyranny of direct Assyrian rule in Samaria opened his eyes to the real character of the "robber-empire," and made clear to him the moral necessity for its extinction. The verses contain nothing to suggest that the retribution is imminent. Isaiah was capable of long views; and there is no reason why the conviction here expressed might not have been in his mind for many years before the crisis actually arrived. On the other hand we know from ch. xx. that during the three years 714—711 Isaiah contemplated an extension of the Assyrian conquests to Egypt and Ethiopia. The publication of an oracle like *vv.* 5 ff. *within* these three years is incredible ; and although an earlier date is not quite inconceivable, it is more natural to assign the verses to the later period, between 710 and 701.

As to the date of the remaining oracles in the chapter, little can be said except that they appear all to depend on *vv.* 5—19, and consequently must have been written somewhat later. The note of *imminence*, which is absent from 5—19, is clear in 24—27 (see *v.* 25) and in 28—34. Only, the imaginary description of the invader's route in *vv.* 28—32 forbids us to place even that passage too near the actual attack. The Assyrians are there conceived as advancing *from the north*, which was the natural course for an Assyrian army from Samaria to take. Sennacherib's expedition, however, came from the Philistine plain, and for some time previous to the event, it must have been evident that that was the direction from which danger was to be apprehended.

For a discussion of the genuineness of the different sections, the

this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

[1]Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose 5
hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane 6

[1] Or, *Woe to Asshur*

reader may consult Cheyne's *Introduction*, pp. 48 ff., or Gray's *Commentary*, pp. 194 ff. Isaiah's authorship is universally admitted for *vv.* 5—9, 13, 14, but is widely questioned or denied as regards the rest of the passage, on grounds, however, which are not convincing, and which cannot be suitably examined here.

The prophecy falls into four main sections :—

i. *vv.* 5—19. The arrogance of Assyria, and the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty in its destruction.

(1) The divine mission entrusted to Assyria is boldly contrasted with the barbarous lust of plunder and conquest, and the glorification of brute force which characterised the policy of that Empire (5—7).

(2) The latter thought is expanded in a speech put into the mouth of the Assyrian, in which he enumerates his past successes, and confidently anticipates an easy conquest of Jerusalem (8—11). The prophet's answer (12).

(3) A second speech of the Assyrian, full of the spirit of self-exaltation and savage delight in the exercise of irresistible power (13, 14); the section closing with a contemptuous reply on the part of the prophet, recalling the image of the opening verse (15).

(4) The appalling fate of Assyria predicted under the two figures of a wasting disease and a consuming fire (16—19).

ii. *vv.* 20—23. The conversion of the Remnant of Israel from reliance on human support to exclusive trust in the power of Jehovah.

iii. *vv.* 24—26. A message of comfort to the harassed nation represented by the dwellers in Zion. [*v.* 27 is of uncertain origin.]

iv. *vv.* 28—34. An ideal description of the march of the Assyrian from the northern frontier to the walls of Jerusalem (28—32) and his sudden annihilation by the hand of Jehovah (33, 34).

5—7. Jehovah's plan contrasted with Assyria's purpose.

5. *Ho Assyrian*] **Ho Asshur**, the name both of the people and its national god. The god being little more than the personified genius of the nation, we might almost venture to suppose that he is here directly addressed and is the speaker in *vv.* 8 ff. But the word is never used of the god in the O.T.

the rod of mine anger] the instrument with which Jehovah chastises the nations, cf. Jer. li. 20.

the staff...indignation] lit. "and a staff, it is in their hand, my indignation,"—an absolutely refractory clause. To say in one line that Assyria is the rod of Jehovah's anger and in the next that His indignation is a staff in *their* hand is awkward in the extreme. It is best to

nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him
a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and [1]to
7 tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he
meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in
8 his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. For
9 he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings? Is not
Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not

[1] Heb. *to make them a treading down.*

omit the words "it is in their hand" as a gloss (suggested to a reader by *v.* 24) and render: **and the staff of mine indignation.**

6. *I will send...will I give*] Rather: **I send...I give.** In a general description of the mission of Assyria it is not advisable to limit the reference to Judah or Israel. The meaning is that Jehovah sends the Assyrian against *any* nation that incurs His anger.

profane] See on ix. 17.

like the mire of the streets] Cf. Ps. xviii. 42 (= 2 Sam. xxii. 43); Mic. vii. 10; Zech. x. 5.

7. *Howbeit he meaneth not so*] The charge is not so much that Asshur exceeds his commission (as in Zech. i. 15) as that he recognises no commission at all; his policy is entirely oblivious of moral interests.

8—11. The first speech of the Assyrian.

8. *Are not my* **officers** *all of them kings?*] Many of them really were subjugated kings (2 Ki. xxv. 28), and any one of them excelled in dignity the petty sovereigns of the independent states (see ch. xxxvi. 9). The title "King of Kings" (Ez. xxvi. 7) was already assumed by Assyrian monarchs.

9. *Calno as Carchemish*] Our idiom reverses the order of the Hebrew: **as Carchemish Calno**; and so throughout. The six cities are thus enumerated in geographical order from north to south. (1) The site of Carchemish (Ass. *Gargamish*) was identified by Mr G. Smith with the ruins of *Jerâbîs* on the right bank of the Euphrates. As a great centre of the Hittite confederacy it had been frequently subdued by Assyrian kings, and was ultimately incorporated in the Empire by Sargon in 717. (2) Calno is probably *Kullani* (a city which has been identified with the modern *Kullanhou*, near Arpad), captured by Tiglath-pileser IV in 738. It is identical with the *Calneh* mentioned in Am. vi. 2 (see Driver's note on the passage); but quite distinct from the Babylonian *Calnêh* of Gen. x. 10. (3) Arpad (now *Tell Erfâd*, about 15 miles north of Aleppo) was taken about 740 by Tiglath-pileser. (4) Hamath (*Hamah*, on the Orontes, about half way between Arpad and Damascus) was taken by Tiglath-pileser in 738 and again by Sargon in 720. (5) Damascus fell about 732 and (6) Samaria in 721.

Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath [1]found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? 10 11

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will [2]punish the fruit of the stout heart of the 12

[1] Or, *reached* [2] Heb. *visit upon.*

10. *the kingdoms of the idols*] The expression "nonentities" (see on ch. ii. 8) is surprising in the mouth of the Assyrian; but not inappropriate, since even from his point of view the overthrow of so many kingdoms might seem a demonstration of the non-entity of their gods as compared with the solitary might of Asshur. Some, however, would read **these kingdoms** (האלה for האליל).

whose graven images, &c.] A circumstantial clause: **although their images**, &c.

did excel] "were more than," either in number or importance. The Assyrian is after all an idolater at heart, measuring the prestige of a god by the multitude and excellence of his graven images.

11. But Samaria has fallen, her idols have not saved her; how then can Jerusalem escape, who trusts in the same deity? *Samaria and* her **nonentities**...*Jerusalem and her* **images**.

12. The arrogant assumption that Jehovah is a mere tribal deity, who is defeated when His images are overthrown, rouses the prophet to an indignant outburst. The verse interrupts what might be read as a single speech of the Assyrian King. But since we have two speeches expressing the same idea in different ways, and since it is not natural to suppose that the boast of Assyria is resumed after the threat of *v.* 12, we may regard *vv.* 8—11 as a duplicate of 13, 14, breaking the original connexion of *v.* 13 with *v.* 7. H. Schmidt suggests that *vv.* 8—12 come from an earlier prose version of the prophecy, which was afterwards elaborated in poetic form by Isaiah himself. This seems better than (with Duhm and others) to save the unity of the speech by removing *vv.* 10—12 as a late interpolation.

performed] **completed**, lit. "cut off." The figure is taken from the cutting off of the finished web from the loom. See ch. xxxviii. 12; also Zech. iv. 9.

his whole work] The work of chastisement and purification, to be executed *upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem*. It would appear that an Assyrian conquest of Jerusalem is contemplated.

the fruit of the stout heart (lit. "fruit of the pride of heart," see ch. ix. 9) *of the king of Assyria*] The "fruit" is the outcome of his pride in such language as *vv.* 8—11. For *I will punish*, read with LXX. **he will visit.**

13 king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he
hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and
by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the
bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and
I have brought down as a valiant man [1]them that sit *on*
14 *thrones*: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of
the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken,
have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that
moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped.

[1] Or, *the inhabitants*

13, 14. The second imaginary speech of the king of Assyria (see on *v.* 12). He ascribes his successes (and how easy have they been! *v.* 14) solely to his own power and wisdom. Comp. the self-glorification of the prince of Tyre in Ezek. xxviii.

13. *I am prudent*] Better, **I have insight.**

I have removed the bounds of the peoples] It was the policy of the later Assyrian Empire to obliterate national distinctions, partly by welding the separate states under a single administration and partly by wholesale deportation of conquered populations. In the view of antiquity this was a violation of the divinely constituted order of the world (see Deut. xxxii. 8).

their treasures] lit. *parata*, "things prepared." Vulg. "principes" read (for עתודיהם) עתידותיהם, "bell-wethers," in the same sense as ch. xiv. 9,—a not improbable text: for 'rob' with personal object see ch. xvii. 14; Jud. ii. 16, &c.

I have...them that sit on thrones] Vulg. "in sublimi residentes." This translation, rather than marg. "inhabitants," is suggested by the verb "bring down," which seems to imply that those referred to were previously exalted. The text is probably defective. LXX. reads the whole clause σεισω πόλεις κατοικουμένας.

as a valiant man] The *Qĕrê* (*kabbîr*, a word found only in Isaiah and Job) means "a great one" (Job xxxiv. 17, 24, xxxvi. 5, of God). It is difficult to see why in this case the consonantal text was departed from. It has *kĕ'abbîr*, either "like a strong one" (*Kaph veritatis*), or "like a bull." See on ch. i. 24. The bull as a symbol of strength figures largely in Assyrian art.

14. The magnificent simile represents the ease with which the Assyrians had rifled the countries of their treasures, and the panic terror which their approach everywhere produced. Sennacherib himself, at a later time, describes his conquest of Armenian tribes "whose dwelling was like the nest of the eagle, the king of the birds" (*Keilinschr. Bibl.*, II. 98 f.).

chirpea] the same word as in viii. 19, xxix. 4.

Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? 15
shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as
if a rod should shake them that lift it up, *or* as if a staff
should lift up *him that is* not wood.

Therefore shall the Lord, the LORD of hosts, send among his 16
fat ones leanness; and [1]under his glory there shall be kindled
a burning like the burning of fire. And the light of Israel shall 17
be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn
and devour his thorns and his briers in one day. And he 18
shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful
field, both soul and body: and it shall be [2]as when a
standardbearer fainteth. And the remnant of the trees of 19
his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

[1] Or, *instead of* [2] Or, *as when a sick man pineth away*

15. To a believer in the divine government of the world the self-exaltation of Assyria is as ludicrous as if a tool were to vaunt itself against the man who uses it. The last two clauses are exclamations.

them that lift it up] A plural of majesty, indicating that Jehovah is meant. It is better, however, with some Hebrew MSS., to read the singular.

should lift up him that is *not wood*] Lit. **should lift up not-wood.** "Not-wood" is a compound noun like "not-man" in ch. xxxi. 8; "one who is not wood" i.e. a man.

16—19. The destruction of the Assyrian army is described under the two figures of sickness and a conflagration. The confusion of metaphor is peculiarly harsh (though cf. v. 24, viii. 8, xxviii. 18), and it is difficult to suppose that the passage in its present form has come from the hand of Isaiah. The attempt to improve it by making 16, 18 *a* β, *b* a duplicate of 17, 18 *a* α, 19 (H. Schmidt) deserves mention, but can hardly be pronounced successful.

16. *the Lord*, **Jehovah** *of hosts*] as in *v.* 16, ch. i. 24.

send among his fat ones] Better, "send into his fat limbs," the image being that of a human body. For the metaphor see ch. xvii. 4.

there shall be kindled...fire] More literally, **there shall burn a burning like the burning of fire.** The monotony is as marked in the Hebrew as in this translation.

17. The figure as in ch. ix. 18.

18. *as when a standardbearer fainteth*] Render with marg., **as when a sick man pineth away**, a return to the figure with which *v.* 16 opens. The participle *nôsēs* occurs nowhere else: R.V. connects it with *nēs* a standard; the translation "sick man" rests on the doubtful analogy of the Syriac.

19. *the remnant*] the same word as in *vv.* 20, 21, 22. *shall be few*] lit. "a number," a numerable quantity.

a child may write them] i.e. make a list of them.

20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant
of Israel, and they that are escaped of the house of Jacob,
shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but
shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.
21 [1]A remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto
22 the mighty God. For though [2]thy people Israel be as the
sand of the sea, *only* a remnant [3]of them shall return:
a consumption *is* determined, overflowing with righteous-
23 ness. For a consumption, and that determined, shall the

[1] Heb. *shear jashub*. See ch. vii. 3. [2] Or, *thy people, O Israel*
[3] Heb. *in it*.

20—23. The conversion of a "remnant." The verses are not the direct continuation of anything that goes before. In thought they have perhaps the closest affinity with *v.* 12, inasmuch as a judgement that sweeps over Jerusalem itself seems implied in both cases (contrast *v.* 24). The section contains the most explicit application in all Isaiah's writings of the idea of the Remnant, although it does not exhaust the significance of that idea. The Remnant will consist of those who are spared in the final visitation (*v.* 20); and their conversion will shew itself in their turning from the fatal policy of trust in earthly power, to the attitude consistently advocated by Isaiah, of quiet reliance on God alone.

20. *stay* (themselves) *upon him that smote them:*] an allusion to the Assyrian alliance contracted by Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 7 ff.), a policy whose evil consequences were fully realised only in the reign of Hezekiah.

21. *A remnant shall* **turn**] In Hebrew *Shĕār-yāshûb*, the name of Isaiah's son (ch. vii. 3).

the mighty God] **the Hero-God**—in ch. ix. 6 a title of the Messiah, but here apparently of Jehovah.

22. However numerous the population of Israel may be, only a remnant shall be saved.

as the sand of the sea] Gen. xxii. 17, xxxii. 12; Hos. i. 10.

a consumption...righteousness] An exterminating judgement, reducing the teeming population of Israel to a mere remnant, will be a convincing manifestation of Jehovah's judicial righteousness (see on ch. i. 27), and of the moral ideals on which His government of the world is based (Whitehouse). It is impossible to take this clause in a consolatory sense, as if the verb "determined" expressed the limit fixed for the judgement. The very similar phraseology of the next verse, compared with ch. xxviii. 22, shews that the threatening aspect of the decree is prominent.

23. *a consummation, and that determined*] is a possible rendering of the Hebrew. But the sense is better expressed by a freer translation: **a final and decisive [work]** (see xxviii. 22). It should be observed that the word rendered "final work" (*kālāh*, lit. 'completion') is from

Lord, the LORD of hosts, make in the midst of all the [1]earth.

Therefore thus saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, O my 24
people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of [2]the Assyrian:
though he smite thee with the rod, and lift up his staff
against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very 25
little while, and the indignation shall be accomplished, and
[3]mine anger, in their destruction. And the LORD of hosts 26
shall stir up against him a scourge, as in the slaughter of
Midian at the rock of Oreb: and [4]his rod shall be over the
sea, and he shall lift it up after the manner of Egypt. And 27

[1] Or, *land* [2] Heb. *Asshur*.
[3] Or, *mine anger* shall be *to their &c.*
[4] Or, *as his rod was over the sea, so shall he &c.*

the same root as that rendered "consumption" (*killāyôn*) in *v.* 22; and the word for "decisive" (*neḥĕrāṣāh*) is a derivative of the same verb as "determined" (*ḥārûṣ*).

24—26. A message of consolation addressed to the dwellers in Zion. The passage is connected with *vv.* 16—19 rather than 20—23.

24. *O my people that dwellest in Zion*] Cf. ch. xiv. 32, xxx. 19. Dwelling in Zion is the emblem of security. The idea of the Remnant is dropped; the assurance being given either to the actual residents in Jerusalem (at the time of the invasion), or to the ideal nation, whose centre is Mount Zion.

though he smite...and lift up...] These are relative clauses attached to "the Assyrian." Render: **who smites thee...and lifts up**, &c. (cf. ix. 4).

after the manner of Egypt] As the Egyptians did in the time of the oppression, Exod. v. (cf. for the expression Am. iv. 10).

25. *For yet a very little while*] Cf. ch. xxix. 17 (xvi. 14).

and mine anger, in their destruction] Better, as marg., *mine anger* shall be *to their destruction*. The two clauses of the verse would then be antithetical; indignation (against Israel) comes to an end, wrath (against Assyria) culminates in its utter destruction. But that is awkward. The best sense is obtained by a slight alteration of the text: **mine anger against the world shall be spent** (read עַל-תֵּבֵל יִתֹּם).

26. For *stir up against him* render **brandish over him**, a sense authenticated by 2 Sam. xxiii. 18.

as in the **smiting**...*Oreb*] For the incident referred to, see Jud. vii. 25 (cf. Ps. lxxxiii. 9, 11; Is. ix. 4).

and his rod...Egypt] To be paraphrased thus: "and His rod (which was stretched out) over the (Red) Sea (at the Exodus from Egypt), he shall lift up as it was lifted up to destroy the Egyptians." The last phrase is used in effective antithesis to the use in *v.* 24.

it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall depart from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed [1]because of [2]the anointing.

[1] Or, *by reason of fatness* [2] Heb. *oil.*

27. An isolated verse. The figures of the burden and the yoke are combined exactly as in ch. xiv. 25. Cf. ix. 2.

and the yoke...anointing] An untranslateable sentence. The text is corrupt; and the line of emendation now generally followed finds in the clause a mutilated introduction to *vv.* 28—32. Prof. Robertson Smith suggested instead of the last four words: יחרל: עלה מצפון שדד. Verse 27 would end with the first word ("the yoke from off thy neck *shall cease*"), and the next would begin thus: "A destroyer comes up from the north; he comes to Aiath, &c." The alterations are considerable, but undoubtedly we thus obtain a suitable commencement to the sketch of the Assyrian advance. Duhm in the main agrees, but reads the last three words, "he comes up from Pene-Rimmon" which he identifies with the Rock Rimmon (Jud. xx. 45), the modern *Rammôn*, nearly two miles N.E. of *Dêr Dîwân* (Aiath). This however plunges us *in medias res* as abruptly as before.

28—32. A free delineation (mostly in prophetic perfects) of the swift advance of an Assyrian army upon Jerusalem. The verses are not to be taken as a prediction that the enemy will actually come by this route, still less of course are they an *oraculum post eventum*. They simply present an imaginative picture of the inevitable Assyrian assault on the independence of Judah. And this is done in order to introduce the assurance that when the invader does come, and the prize is just within his grasp, Jehovah will smite him down (*vv.* 33 f.).

The strategic point in the itinerary here sketched is the so-called "pass" (*v.* 29) of Michmash, the scene of Jonathan's famous exploit against the Philistines (1 Sam. xiv.). It is situated in the modern *Wâdi Suweinît*, and is guarded by the villages of Michmash on the north and Geba on the south. The road from Michmash crosses the valley in a south-westerly direction, and about midway between Michmash and Geba (the whole distance is about two miles) traverses a narrow and precipitous gorge where a large army might easily be checked by a handful of resolute defenders. In *vv.* 28 f. Isaiah alludes to the precautions that would be taken to secure a safe passage of this difficult ravine. It is not at first sight obvious why the prophet imagines the Assyrians as choosing so difficult and dangerous a route. The main road from the north, running some miles W. of Geba, is that which would naturally be taken by a large army operating from Samaria, its only disadvantage being that for a long distance the approach could be seen from Jerusalem. It would seem, therefore, that Isaiah is thinking of a *surprise attack*, in which the enemy's movements would be screened from observation till he was within striking-distance of the capital. May we suppose (with Schmidt) that this was the route actually taken

He is come to Aiath, he is passed through Migron; at 28
Michmash he layeth up his baggage: they are gone over the 29
pass: [1] they have taken up their lodging at Geba: Ramah
trembleth: Gibeah of Saul is fled. Cry aloud with thy 30
voice, O daughter of Gallim! hearken, O Laishah! [2] O thou
poor Anathoth! Madmenah is a fugitive; the inhabitants 31
of Gebim [3] gather themselves to flee. This very day shall he 32

[1] Or, *Geba is our lodging*, they cry
[2] Or, as otherwise read, *answer her, O Anathoth!*
[3] Or, *make* their households *flee*

by the allied Syrians and Ephraimites in 735, and that the memory of that event formed the psychological basis of this vision of the Assyrian onslaught?

28. *he is come* **by** *Aiath*] *'Ayyath* (cf. 1 Chr. vii. 28 [R.V. marg.]; Neh. xi. 31) is no doubt the ancient *'Ai*, possibly *Dêr Dîwân*, 2½ miles N.W. from Michmash.

Migron] The only known place of this name lay on the south side of the valley (1 Sam. xiv. 2). Prof. Robertson Smith thought the operation indicated was the seizing of this post on the southern side by a *coup de main* before attempting to lead the main army through the defile. Most commentators, however, hold that some place, not to be certainly identified, between Ai and Michmash is intended.

layeth up his baggage] deposits his *impedimenta*.

29. *gone over the pass*] Rather, **traversed the defile**: the narrow *canyon* at the bottom of the Wadi, known as the "passage" (*ma'bar*) of Michmash (1 Sam. xiii. 23). The following clause is best translated as the eager cry of the Assyrians: "**Geba is our night quarters**" (see marg.). From this point the road to Jerusalem lies open; hence the remaining verses simply describe the terror spread amongst the villages along the route of the Assyrians. *Ramah* (*Er-Râm*) is less than two miles due west of Geba, *Gibeah of Saul* is probably *Tuleil el-Fûl*, about halfway between that place and Jerusalem.

30. Shriek loudly, O daughter of Gallim; listen, O Laishah. Neither of these places can be identified.

O thou poor Anathoth] Translate, with a slight change of pointing (עֲנִיָּה for עֲנִיָּהּ), **answer her, O Anathoth.** Anathoth (*'Anâta*) is about 2½ miles N.N.E. from Jerusalem, on the road from Geba.

31. *Madmenah* (Dung-hill) and *Gebim* (Cisterns) are both unknown. For *gather themselves to flee* render: **hastily secure** (**their belongings**), Ex. ix. 19; Jer. iv. 6, vi. 1.

32. *This very day*] A doubtful rendering of a difficult phrase (lit. "still to-day"). Since Geba is not more than 10 miles from Jerusalem, the arrival at Nob on the day after the night spent at Geba (*v.* 29) can hardly signalise the rapidity of the advance. Nob (1 Sam. xxi., xxii.; Neh. xi. 32) must be sought in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, but

halt at Nob: he shaketh his hand at the mount of the [1]daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the boughs with terror: and the high ones of stature shall
34 be hewn down, and the lofty shall be brought low. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

[1] Another reading is, *house*

its site has not yet been ascertained. The most suitable conjecture is that it was on the height of Scopus overlooking the city from the north.

33, 34. Just when the Assyrian is in sight of his goal, Jehovah smites him down. The description naturally passes into figurative and somewhat vague language; and there is no sufficient reason to doubt that the *vv.* are the original conclusion of *vv.* 28—32. The image is that of a stately forest laid low by the axe-man.

33. *the Lord...hosts*, as in *v.* 16.

with terror] Or, **with a crash**. The Heb. word (*ma'ărāzāh*) does not occur elsewhere. Duhm reads somewhat prosaically "with an axe" (*ma'ăzād*).

the high ones of stature, and *the lofty* are the great trees: the epithets keep within the limits of the figure.

34. *the thickets of the forest*] cf. ch. ix. 18. *Lebanon*] Better, **the Lebanon**. Lebanon in Hebr. prose always retains the art.; here, however, the reference is, by metonymy, to its forests, which supply a figure for the Assyrian army.

a mighty one] or "a majestic One"—Jehovah Himself. Some critics would substitute the name of an implement, as a parallel to *with iron* in the previous line. Gray, however, points out that the word for *with iron* is metrically superfluous, and very probably a gloss. He reads **with its majestic ones** (i.e. cedars).

CH. XI.

The overthrow of the world-power is followed by the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom. In this chapter, however, we have two Messianic pictures so distinct in character that it is necessary to consider them separately.

(i) *vv.* 1—9 contain a prophecy of the advent of the Messiah (*v.* 1), a description of his character (2) and government (3—5) and a picture of the marvellous transformation of animated nature which is the reflection of his just and beneficent reign (6—9). The passage stands along with ch. ix. 1—7 and xxxii. 1 ff. as one of the three great presentations of the conception of a personal Messiah which the book of Isaiah contains. Until quite recently the Isaianic authorship of all three passages was accepted without hesitation by critics of all shades of

opinion. Hackmann, Cheyne, Marti and others now dissent from this view, and relegate the whole conception of a personal Messiah to a period subsequent to the Exile. But their objections are hardly of sufficient weight to justify so revolutionary a conclusion. The linguistic arguments are admitted by Cheyne to be indecisive. And while it is true that the contents of the prophecy do not point unambiguously to the age of Isaiah, this is not to be wondered at in a delineation of the ideal future. On the other hand the passage contains no assumptions inconsistent with Isaiah's authorship. For the decay of the Davidic dynasty, which appears to be implied in the figure of *v.* 1, is not a presupposition in the sense that the prophecy could not have been written until it was an accomplished fact. It is assumed only that the reigning dynasty will have disappeared before the manifestation of the Messiah; and this expectation is in harmony with Isaiah's conception of the progress of events. It is no more than is involved in the sentence of rejection on Ahaz (ch. vii. 13 ff.), or perhaps in the anticipation of an overwhelming national calamity, which the prophet maintained to the end of his ministry. In any case the Messianic age is a new creation, and if there was to be an ideal Son of David at all, he must be conceived as a new shoot from the ancient stock of Jesse.

(ii) *vv.* 10—16, on the other hand, describe mainly the formation of the new Messianic community by the home-gathering of Israelites from all parts of the world. The arguments against the genuineness of this passage are more cogent than in the case of (i), and are endorsed by a wider circle of critics. Here a definite historical situation is assumed which can only with violence be harmonised with the actual circumstances of Isaiah's time. Jews are in exile not only in Assyria, but in Egypt, Ethiopia, the Mediterranean lands, &c. Further, these Exiles are described as a "Remnant," a term which seems to imply that some have been already restored, and which at all events is never used by Isaiah of those who have gone into captivity, but of those who survive the judgment in the land of Israel. It is no doubt possible to say, with Delitzsch and Bredenkamp, that Isaiah might have been transported into the future, and dealt with a state of things which was not to arise till long afterwards. But it is in accordance with the analogy of prophecy to suppose that the outlook was conceived in the circumstances which it presupposes, especially since the undoubted writings of Isaiah never mention a return from Exile, or a restoration of the Northern Tribes, or a subjugation of the neighbouring states by warlike conquest. These facts, and others which will be referred to in the Notes, shew quite conclusively that the passage was not written by Isaiah.

Ch. XI. 1—9. The Messiah and His Kingdom.

It is interesting to compare this passage with ch. ix. 2—7. There the delineation of the Messianic age starts from its broadest and most general features—the light breaking on the land, the universally diffused joy of the redeemed nation—and only at the end centres itself in the

11 And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of
2 Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the

person of the Wonderful Child who is born to ascend the throne. Here the person of the Messiah comes first, and then the healing and regenerating influences of which he is the channel. To what period of Isaiah's career the prophecy belongs cannot be determined. The affinity with ch. ix. 2—7 suggests the reign of Ahaz, to which it was assigned by Guthe in accordance with a particular theory of the development of Isaiah's eschatology. But since there is no evidence that the idea of the Messianic King ever lost its significance to the prophet's mind, it might with equal propriety be referred to any subsequent period of his ministry. Duhm places this and the companion oracles of ii. 2–4, xxxii. 1—5 in the evening of Isaiah's long life. In its present setting the passage is no doubt intended as a sequel to ch. x. 5—34 and might even belong to the same date.

1. The advent of the Messiah. Idea and figure correspond to those of ch. vi. 13; as a new Israel will spring up from the "stump" of the old, so the Messianic King will arise from the decayed family of David. Some commentators find in the image an intentional contrast to that of ch. x. 34; while the forest of Assyria is cut down never to spring up again, the stock of Judah's royal dynasty will sprout and flourish. The precise relation of the Messiah to the reigning branch of the family is purposely left indefinite (cf. Mic. v. 2).

a shoot] a slender branch or twig. In Prov. xiv. 3 it means as in Aramaic "rod" (sceptre). The word rendered *stock* occurs only twice again. Here it bears the same meaning as in Job xiv. 8; it is the **stump** which remains in the earth after the tree is cut down. In Is. xl. 24 it means a "slip" planted in the ground in order to strike root. The figure, therefore, like "roots" in the next line, seems to imply the downfall of the dynasty.

a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit] shall come to maturity. A slight change of text (ו for ר) gives a better parallelism: **shall sprout**. Jesse is mentioned instead of David probably because of the intentional vagueness in which the Messiah's origin is left.

2. His supernatural endowment through the spirit of Jehovah with the qualities of a perfect ruler. The "charismata" are grouped in three pairs; when we add the separate mention of the spirit of Jehovah at the head of the list we may perhaps find here the first suggestion of the "seven spirits" of God (Rev. i. 4). In reality, however, the three pairs unfold the different aspects of the "spirit of Jehovah." The first pair of virtues are intellectual, the second practical, and the third religious.

wisdom and understanding (or **discernment**) are the fundamental intellectual qualifications of a judge or ruler. Deut. i. 13; 1 Ki. iii. 12.

counsel and might] "Counsel" is the faculty of adapting means to

spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and [1]his 3
[2]delight shall be in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not
judge after the sight of his eyes, neither [3]reprove after the
hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge 4
the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the [4]earth:
and he shall smite the [4]earth with the rod of his mouth, and

[1] Or, *he shall be of quick understanding* [2] Heb. *scent.*
[3] Or, *decide* [4] Or, *land*

ends or of forming right resolutions; "might" the energy necessary to carry them through.

of knowledge...LORD] **of the knowledge and fear of Jehovah.** It seems necessary here to take "knowledge" as equivalent to "knowledge of Jehovah," in spite of the rule that "not more than one construct can stand before the same genitive" (Davidson, *Syntax*, § 27. *b*). "Knowledge of God" is insight into His character and His moral claims on men, "fear of God" is the common O.T. expression for piety; both together make up the O.T. idea of religion.

3—5. Thus equipped with all the personal qualities needful for his high office, the ideal King will exercise a perfectly just and equitable government over his subjects. The Hebrew conception of kingship includes two functions, leadership in war and the administration of justice in time of peace (1 Sam. viii. 20). Here, for an obvious reason (ch. ix. 5), only the civil aspect of the office is dwelt upon.

3. *and his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD*] lit. "his scent shall be in, &c." The Messiah will not only possess true religion himself, but will be quick to recognise its presence in others and take delight in it wherever he finds it. The sense is perhaps appropriate, but the expression is very awkward, and there can be no doubt that the clause is a corrupt repetition of the preceding words.

he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, &c.] i.e. in virtue of the spirit with which he is endowed, he shall not be dependent on the evidence of his senses, but shall immediately and infallibly discern the moral condition of men's hearts (cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 20). The second member of the parallelism shews that more than mere impartiality in judgement is intended. For *reprove* render **decide**, as marg. (so in *v.* 4).

4. The special objects of his care are the defenceless and downtrodden classes (cf. ch. i. 23, x. 2). Observe that the sporadic outbreak of injustice and violence does not appear to be excluded from Isaiah's conception of the Messianic age (cf. xxxii. 5, lxv. 20); only, the transgressors are at once discovered and destroyed.

the meek of the earth] Possibly "the oppressed in the land." Two words (*'ānî* and *'ānāv*) are often confounded in the Hebr. Text; the former means simply to be in abject circumstances, the latter includes the religious virtue of resignation to an adverse lot (Rahlfs, *'Anî und 'Anaw in den Psalmen*).

he shall smite the earth] The word for "earth" (*'erez*) is probably

5 with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And
righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness
6 the girdle of his reins. And the wolf shall dwell with the
lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the
calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a
7 little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear
shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and
8 the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child

written wrongly for *'ārîẓ* "ruthless." It is not permissible, with Del. &c., to explain "earth" in the N.T. sense of "the (ungodly) world," or "Wicked," in the next clause, of the Antichrist (cf. 2 Thess. ii. 8).

with the rod of his mouth...with the breath of his lips] Cf. Rev. i. 6. The Messiah's sentence has a self-fulfilling energy (cf. Hos. vi. 5; Acts v. 1—10). This reveals the operation of the "spirit of might," as *v.* 3 represents the effect of the "spirit of wisdom."

5. "Righteousness" and "faithfulness" are the strength of the Messiah's government (ch. ix. 7). The girdle is the symbol of resolute and vigorous action. Comp. the "girdle of truth" in Eph. vi. 14.

6—8. This remarkable prophecy of the idyllic state of the brute creation is imitated in the Sibylline Oracles (III. 766 ff.) and more faintly echoed in the Fourth and Fifth Eclogues of Vergil (iv. 21 ff., v. 56 ff.). Similarly, an Arabic poet (*Ibn Onein*, quoted by Ges.) speaks of "a righteousness, through which the hungry wolf becomes tame."—The description is not to be interpreted allegorically, as if the wild beasts were merely symbols for cruel and rapacious men. Neither perhaps is it to be taken quite literally. It is rather a poetic presentation of the truth that the regeneration of human society is to be accompanied by a restoration of the harmony of creation (cf. Rom. viii. 19 22). The fact that tame and wild animals are regularly bracketed together shews that the main idea is the establishment of peace between man and the animals (Hos. ii. 20); the animals that are now wild shall no longer prey on those that are domesticated for the service of man. But the striking feature of the prophecy is that the predatory beasts are not conceived as extirpated (as Ez. xxxiv. 25, 28) but as having their habits and instincts changed.

6. *shall dwell*] lit. **sojourn** as a protected guest.

and the fatling] A second domestic animal in the line is obviously *de trop*, and a verb is missing. Read **shall graze** (cf. LXX. ἅμα βοσκηθήσονται).

7. Cf. lxv. 25. *shall feed*] Better, **shall graze**, unless we are to supply "alike" as in lxv. 25. Some critics prefer to read "shall associate together," with a small alteration of the text; and this is a necessary variation of expression if we adopt the emendation proposed in *v.* 6.

8. The most startling contrast of all,—the innocent babe playing with the deadly serpent.

shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child
shall put his hand on the [1]basilisk's den. They shall not 9
hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth
shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters
cover the sea.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of 10
Jesse, which standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto

[1] Or, *adder's*

asp] Heb. *pethen*, rendered "adder" in Ps. lviii. 4, xci. 13, elsewhere as here. The species has not been identified. The *basilisk* (*ẓiph'ônî*, rendered "adder" in Prov. xxiii. 32) is usually identified with the King-serpent of North Africa, but that reptile is not found in Palestine. The renderings are immaterial in a passage like this.

The word *den* (only here) is doubtful. One view is that it is fem. of the word for "luminary" and denotes the glittering eye of the serpent, which attracts the child like a jewel. That is a rather jejune interpretation. The parallel requires some such sense as E.V. gives, though it probably involves some change of text.

shall put his hand] The verb rendered *put* means strictly "lead"; comp. *ducere manum*. But here again the text is very uncertain. Gray proposes "shall trip about" (יִתְדַּדֶּה for ידו הדה).

9. It is questionable if the subject here is still the wild beasts (as in lxv. 25). The second half of the verse is rather against this, and it is better to translate the first half: **none shall do evil or act corruptly in all**, &c. But the whole verse seems to be a secondary combination of part of lxv. 25 with Hab. ii. 14.

my holy mountain] Most naturally "Zion," but some commentators understand it of the whole hill-country of Palestine. The expression is never used by Isaiah.

for the earth shall be full...sea] Cf. Hab. ii. 14. On the peculiar participial construction, see Driver, *Tenses*, § 135. (7) Obs.

CH. XI. (10) 11—16. A PROPHECY OF THE RETURN FROM EXILE.

10. This verse occupies a position somewhat detached from those that follow, as is shewn by the repetition of the introductory formula in *v.* 11. The thought also is distinct and complete. It is a prophecy of the attractive influence of the true religion over the nations of the world; and resembles ch. ii. 2—4, although here the personal Messiah is the central figure.

the root of Jesse] i.e. the "branch from the roots," of *v.* 1. The expression seems to have become a technical title of the Messiah (cf. ch. liii. 2; Ecclus. xlvii. 22; Rev. v. 5, xxii. 16). The variation of the figure from *v.* 1 tells against the Isaianic authorship of this passage.

an ensign] **a signal** as rallying-point, see on ch. v. 26.

him shall the nations seek; and his resting place shall be [1]glorious.

11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord [2]shall set his hand again the second time to [3]recover the remnant of his people, which shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam,

[1] Heb. *glory*.
[2] Or, *shall again the second time recover with his hand*
[3] Or, *purchase* See Ex. xv. 16.

unto him shall the nations seek] Rather, **of him shall nations enquire**—a phrase used of the consulting of an oracle (ch. viii. 19, xix. 3). The Messiah is to be the great religious Teacher and Authority of the world.

his resting-place] Comp. Ps. xcv. 11, cxxxii. 14. The Vulgate renders *sepulcrum ejus*, regarding the "signal" as a prophecy of the Cross (cf. John xii. 32).

11. The gathering of the "dispersed of Israel." It is of course impossible to disprove that in Isaiah's time scattered Israelites were to be found in all the countries mentioned at the end of *v.* 11. Some might have been included among the captives whom Sargon settled in Elam, Babylonia and Hamath; fugitives from the Northern Kingdom might have taken refuge in considerable numbers in Egypt at the fall of Samaria; and the slave-trade might have carried small groups of Hebrews to the remoter regions. But the language here seems to imply a Jewish dispersion on a large scale, and the only wholesale deportations that had taken place in Isaiah's time were those of Northern Israelites to the Assyrian Empire (2 Ki. xv. 29, xvii. 6). On the other hand, the references exactly fit the circumstances of the post-exilic period, when large colonies of Jews are known to have been spread over the lands here enumerated.

the Lord shall set his hand again] Or, **the Lord shall again [lift up] his hand**. The verb has to be supplied from the context.

the second time] If the standpoint (actual or ideal) of the prophecy be post-exilic, the most probable reference would be to the first return from exile under Cyrus. Otherwise, we must understand "the first time" of the exodus from Egypt, which is hardly natural, although the prophecy does abound in allusions to that great deliverance.

the remnant] An Isaianic word, but used in a non-Isaianic sense. See introductory note to this chapter. For *recover* read **purchase**, or "redeem."

Pathros (Upper Egypt, Gen. x. 14) and *Cush* (Ethiopia) are dependencies of Egypt; *Elam* (Susiana), *Shinar* (Babylonia) and *Hamath* (see on ch. x. 9) of Assyria. It should be noticed that the use of the name "Assyria" for the supreme power in Western Asia occurs in post-exilic writings (Ezra vi. 22, &c.).

and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the [1]islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, 12 and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and they 13 that vex [2]Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. And they shall 14 fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines on the west; together shall they spoil the children of the east: they shall put forth their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall 15

[1] Or, *coast-lands* [2] Or, *in Judah*

the islands of the sea] The **coast-lands** or countries bordering on the Mediterranean.

12. The meaning of the "signal" here is explained by ch. xlix. 22; it is a signal to the *nations* to release or even to bring back the *exiles*.

the dispersed of Judah] The participle in Heb. is fem. This may be "a short way of expressing that both sexes will be included" (Cheyne). Giesebrecht, however, explains it by the favourite emblem (with later writers) of a scattered flock (Ez. xxxiv. 4 ff.; Zeph. iii. 19).

the four corners (lit. "wings"; cf. Deut. xxii. 12 [edges]) *of the earth*] The expression occurs only in Ez. vii. 2 (of the land); Job xxxvii. 3, xxxviii. 13 (cf. Is. xxiv. 16).

13, 14. The healing of the breach between the Northern and Southern kingdoms, and their joint conquest of the neighbouring peoples. Comp. Hos. i. 11; Ez. xxxvii. 15 ff.

13. The parallelism with the second half of the verse seems to demand that the **adversaries of Judah** (R.V. *they that vex Judah*) be explained as gen. of the subject (those in Judah that are adversaries to Ephraim). This is not natural; and it is perhaps necessary to ignore the parallel and take both this and *envy of Ephraim* as gen. of obj. (envy felt by Judah towards Ephraim).

shall not vex] or "oppress." It is the verb of which "adversaries" is the participle.

14. *they shall fly down*] or **swoop**, as a bird of prey (Hab. i. 8). The low range of hills between the highlands of Judah and the coastal territory of the Philistines is compared to a *shoulder* falling down towards the sea (cf. Num. xxxiv. 11; Jos. xv. 11, xviii. 12; Ez. xxv. 9).

the children of the east] a name for the nomads of the Eastern desert.

they shall put...obey them] The Hebrew construction is peculiar. Lit. "Edom and Moab shall be the forth-putting of their hand, and the children of Ammon their obedience."

15, 16. A miraculous passage prepared for the return of the exiles.

[1]utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with
his [2]scorching wind shall he shake his hand over the River,
and shall smite it into seven streams, and cause men to
16 march over dryshod. And there shall be an high way for
the remnant of his people, which shall remain, from Assyria;
like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out
of the land of Egypt.

[1] Heb. *devote*. According to some ancient versions, *dry up*.
[2] According to some ancient versions, *mighty*.

The allusions to the Exodus are palpable and extend to the next chapter.

15. Cf. Zech. x. 10 f. *shall utterly destroy*] lit. "lay under the ban." But the reading of several ancient versions (*hehĕrîb* for *hehĕrîm*) gives a better sense: **dry up**; cf. ch. l. 2. *the tongue of the Egyptian sea* is the Gulf of Suez (cf. Jos. xv. 2, 5, xviii. 19).

shake his hand] Cf. ch. x. 32, xix. 16.

with his scorching wind] Perhaps **with the fierce heat of his breath**. The word rendered "fierce heat" does not occur again, but a similar Arabic word is used of internal heat (either physical or mental). The phrase seems misplaced; it belongs to the figure of the drying up of the sea, not to that of shaking the hand, and may be a gloss. *over the River*] the Euphrates, as in ch. vii. 20, viii. 7. *into seven streams*] lit. "wadis," apparently in their waterless condition, as in summer. *dryshod*] lit. "in sandals."

16. *a highway*] through river and desert. This miraculous "highway" is a frequent feature in prophetic descriptions of the return from exile. Cf. ch. xl. 3, 4, xlii. 16, xlix. 11, xxxv. 8, &c.

Ch. XII

forms the lyrical epilogue to the first great division of the book (ch. i.—xii.). It consists of two short hymns of praise (*vv.* 1, 2 and *vv.* 3—6) which are put into the mouth of the ransomed people. As Israel sang songs of triumph after the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. xv.), so the restored exiles shall celebrate the great salvation with such psalms of thanksgiving and joy as these. There is thus an obvious link of connexion with xi. 10—16, where the anticipations of the Messianic salvation are throughout largely coloured by reminiscences of the exodus from Egypt. The secondary and imitative character of the chapter is so apparent as to exclude the supposition that it was written by Isaiah. Its literary affinities are with the Song of Moses, with certain parts of the Psalter, and with lyrical passages interspersed in the later prophecy of ch. xxiv.—xxvii. (see the Notes below). With the exception of the expression "Holy One of Israel" in *v.* 6 it presents

And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto 12
thee, O LORD; for though thou wast angry with me, [1]thine
anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, 2
God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid:
for [2]the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and song; and
he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye 3
draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that 4
day shall ye say, Give thanks unto the LORD, [3]call upon
his name, declare his doings among the peoples, make

[1] Or, *let thine anger turn away, and comfort thou me*
[2] Heb. *Jah Jehovah.* [3] Or, *proclaim his name*

none of the phrases distinctive of Isaiah's style; and in no other instance does that prophet close an oracle with a liturgical passage like this. Hence the opinion expressed by Ewald in 1840, that the chapter is a late addition to the book of Isaiah, has won universal acceptance among scholars.

1, 2. The first song, the singer being the individualised community, as frequently in the Pss.

1. The introductory formula (here and in *v.* 4) resembles those in xxv. 9, xxvi. 1, xxvii. 2. *thou wast angry*] a word never used by any prophet, but found in Ps. ii. 12, lx. 1, lxxix. 5, lxxxv. 5.

is turned away] The form is that of the jussive (see marg.); but it is probably the contracted form of the consec. impf. which sometimes occurs in the Pss. (Davidson, *Synt.* § 65, R. 6).

The second half of the verse is repeated almost verbally from Ex. xv. 2, as Ps. cxviii. 14. (**my**) *song*] the personal suff. is omitted in Heb., probably through defective writing.

the LORD JEHOVAH] Hebr. **Yah Yahwe**, a combination only recurring in ch. xxvi. 4. Since LXX. and other versions have only one Divine name here it is probable that the second came in through confusion with the following consonants.

my salvation] The word here used (*yĕshū'āh*) is not found in genuine prophecies of Isaiah.

3. A promise connecting the first song with the second (*vv.* 4–6).

wells of salvation] (cf. Ps. lxxxvii. 7). The language is figurative, denoting the inexhaustible fulness of the Divine blessings prepared for the people of God.

4—6. The members of the redeemed community exhort each other to publish the praises of Jehovah to the world.

4. The first part exactly as Ps. cv. 1; the last clause resembles Ps. cxlviii. 13, &c.

call upon his name] lit. "call by (means of) His name," i.e. use His name (Jehovah) in solemn invocation. See 1 Ki. xviii. 24. The word for "*exalted*" occurs in ch. ii. 11, 17.

5 mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for
he hath done [1]excellent things: [2]let this be known in all the
6 earth. Cry aloud and shout, thou [3]inhabitant of Zion: for
great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

[1] Or, *gloriously* [2] Or, *this is made known* [3] Heb. *inhabitress.*

5. *done excellent things*] "excellence," ch. xxvi. 10; cf. Ex. xv. 1: **wrought proudly.**

let this be known] is better than marg. "this is made known."

6. *Cry* **out**] the same word as in ch. x. 30, but in a very different sense. Cf. ch. xxiv. 14, liv. 1.

inhabitant of Zion] Lit. "inhabitress" (marg.), Jerusalem being personified as a woman, Jer. li. 35, xlvi. 19; Mic. i. 11—15, &c.

the Holy One of Israel] This Isaianic phrase occurs in several of the Psalms (lxxi. 22, lxxviii. 41, lxxxix. 19).

CH. XIII. 1—XIV. 23. THE FALL OF BABYLON.

This is the first of the collection of oracles, dealing mainly with foreign nations, which forms the second great division of the first part of the Book of Isaiah (see Introd., pp. lxxix f.). It contains two distinct and complete pieces: (1) a prophecy of the impending sack and capture of Babylon by the Medes (xiii. 2—22), and (2) an ode of triumph to be sung by the Jews over the downfall of their oppressor, the personified Empire of Babylon (xiv. 4*b*—21). These are connected by a few verses in a style different from either (xiv. 1—4*a*); and the ode is followed by a couple of verses which reaffirm the doom pronounced on Babylon in the end of ch. xiii. (xiv. 22 f.). The amalgamation of the two principal sections is due to an editor; hence it is naturally impossible to say whether both were written by the same poet or not.

That the passage as it now stands was not written by Isaiah appears from the following considerations. (*a*) In Isaiah's time Babylon was either a subject province of the Assyrian Empire or engaged in unsuccessful revolt against it. Here she is represented as the supreme world-power, the glory of kingdoms, intoxicated with her own success, and exercising a cruel tyranny over many nations (xiii. 11, 19, xiv. 5 f., 12 ff., 16 f.). (*b*) In particular she is the power that has long held Israel in the thraldom of exile (xiv. 1—3); an event which might conceivably have been foreseen by Isaiah, but which he could not have assumed as known to the men of his time. But (*c*) a transference of the world-empire from Assyria to Babylon is really excluded by Isaiah's scheme of history, since he conceives the overthrow of Assyria as followed immediately by the Messianic age. (*d*) The style and language are not those of Isaiah; and the spirit of fierce and vindictive triumph over the fallen foe, while explicable in a writer of the exile period, would be unnatural in the case of Isaiah. The prophecy, therefore, must have been unintelligible to the contemporaries of Isaiah;

The [1]burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz 13
did see.

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*

and on the principle that the prophet always addresses himself primarily to the circumstances of his own time, we must assign these chapters to the closing years of the Babylonian captivity. The poem in ch. xiii. must have been written between the overthrow of the Assyrian Empire in 606 B.C., when the Medes first became a leading Asiatic power, and the fall of Babylon in 538. A more exact determination of its date is scarcely possible. Even on the question whether it was written before or after the consolidation of the Median and Persian power by Cyrus in 549, conflicting inferences are drawn from xiii. 17 (see on the verse below). The ode of ch. xiv., if originally composed of the fate of Babylon, might be dated somewhat nearer the catastrophe; but it seems not improbable that it is an older poem which has been adapted by the editor (*v.* 4*a*) to the situation at the close of the Exile (see below, p. 128).

Chap. xiii. falls into three main divisions. A subdivision of each into two nearly equal strophes (Duhm) is possible, though less clearly marked.

i. *vv.* 2—8. A magnificently poetical description of the impending attack.

(1) The mustering of Jehovah's host on the north-eastern mountains (2—4).

(2) The approach of the avengers, Jehovah at their head, inspiring terror and dismay throughout the world (5—8).

ii. *vv.* 9—16. The meaning of the judgement.

(1) The "Day of the Lord" has at last arrived, heralded by physical convulsions, to sweep wickedness and tyranny from the face of the earth (9—12).

(2) The flight of foreign merchants from the doomed city and the massacre of her population (13—16).

iii. *vv.* 17—22. The fate of Babylon.

(1) At length the writer lays aside the veil of apocalyptic imagery and announces in express terms that the invaders are the pitiless barbarians of Media, and the object of their attack is Babylon (17—19).

(2) The prophecy then closes with a weird picture of the eternal desolation reserved for the imperial city.

1. The superscription, prefixed by an editor who attributed the prophecy to Isaiah.

The burden] Rather, "The utterance," or **oracle** (marg.). The word occurs ten times in the headings of this section of the book (also in ch. xxx. 6). The Heb. is *massā'*, and means literally a "lifting up (of the voice)." See 2 Kings ix. 25. The E.V., following several ancient versions, takes it in its commoner sense of "burden" (thing lifted), a confusion which seems as old as the time of Jeremiah (xxiii. 33—40) and Ezekiel (xii. 10).

which Isaiah...did see] See on i. 1, ii. 1.

2 Set ye up an ensign upon the bare mountain, lift up the
voice unto them, wave the hand, that they may go into the
3 gates of the nobles. I have commanded my consecrated
ones, yea, I have called my mighty men for mine anger,
4 even [1]my proudly exulting ones. The noise of a multi-
tude in the mountains, like as of a great people! the noise
of a tumult of the kingdoms of the nations gathered together!
5 the LORD of hosts mustereth the host for the battle. They
come from a far country, from the uttermost part of heaven,
even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to

[1] Or, *them that exult in my majesty*

2—4. Jehovah musters His hosts. As in ch. xl. 1 ff., the air is alive with spirit-voices premonitory of great events impending: there the heavenly music of hope and salvation, but here the demon cries of havoc and war.

2. *Set ye up an ensign*] **a signal**, ch. v. 26.

upon the bare mountain] i.e. one denuded of trees, so that the signal might be clearly distinguished.

the gates of the nobles] The city gates through which the Babylonian magnates passed to and fro. The name Babel (Bab-ilu) signifies "Gate of God."

3. Jehovah speaks.

my consecrated ones] In ancient times a campaign was inaugurated with religious ceremonies (1 Sam. xiii. 9; Jer. xxii. 7, li. 28; Joel iii. 9 [marg.]), and each warrior was a consecrated man (1 Sam. xxi. 5).

my proudly exulting ones] Zeph. iii. 11.

4. Already the prophet seems to hear from afar the din of the gathering multitude.

The noise of a multitude] Better as an exclamation, **Hark, a tumult.** And so in the next clause, **Hark, the uproar of**.... The "mountains" are those beyond the Zagros range, N.E. of Babylonia, where the territory of the Medes lay. To understand them as "ideal barriers" weakens the poetry of the passage. But it must be noted that *as yet* there is no explicit reference to the Medes. Jehovah's host consists of "nations," "kingdoms," "much people": it is a huge miscellaneous horde gathered from the remote barbaric regions of the earth (*v.* 5) to execute His judgement on the civilised world. This is perhaps a traditional (but hardly ancient) eschatological conception, which finds its clearest embodiment in Ezekiel's vision of the army of Gog in ch. xxxviii. f.

kingdoms of the nations] With a small vocalic change: **of kingdoms,—nations** assembled, &c.

5. The host is now seen in motion, advancing under the guidance of Jehovah to its appointed goal.

destroy the whole land. Howl ye; for the day of the LORD 6
is at hand; as destruction from [1]the Almighty shall it
come. Therefore shall all hands be feeble, and every heart 7
of man shall melt: and they shall be dismayed; [2]pangs 8
and sorrows shall take hold *of them*; they shall be in pain
as a woman in travail: they shall be amazed one at another;
their faces *shall be* faces of flame. Behold, the day of the 9
LORD cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make
the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out
of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof 10

[1] Heb. *Shaddai*. See Gen. xvii. 1.
[2] Or, *they shall take hold of pangs and sorrows*

the whole land] Rather, **the whole earth**. The Babylonian Empire was practically co-extensive with the civilised world. But again the language is probably not political but eschatological: it is the final judgement on the entire human race that is contemplated.

6. The verse is almost identical with Joel i. 15. On the "day of Jehovah" see on ch. ii. 12.

as destruction from the Almighty] The Heb. phrase contains an alliteration which cannot be easily reproduced in English. The Germans render "wie Gewalt vom Gewaltigen." The word for "Almighty" is the Divine name *Shaddai* (see Ex. vi. 3), but its etymology is doubtful. According to one derivation it comes from the same root as the word for "destruction," so that we might almost venture to translate "like destruction from the Destroyer." This verse, however, can hardly be appealed to in support of that view, since it may imply nothing beyond the mere play upon words. (See further, Driver, *Joel and Amos*, p. 81 f.)

7. "Hands hanging down" and "hearts melting" are frequent images of despair (ch. xix. 1; Ez. xxi. 7; Job iv. 3; Josh. vii. 5, &c.).

8. *they shall be amazed one at another*] i.e. "look in horror on each other."

their faces...flame] burning with feverish excitement, or perhaps with shame (Ez. vii. 18). There are no exact parallels to the expression; cf. Joel ii. 6; Nah. ii. 10.

9—16. The middle division of the prophecy enlarges on the nature, purpose and effects of this day of Jehovah.

9. *the day of the LORD cometh, cruel, &c.*] The word *yôm* "day of" should probably be omitted from the text, leaving Jehovah as the personal subject of the following clauses.

land] Rather, **earth**, as in *v.* 5.

10. "The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light," Am. v. 18.

the constellations thereof] The Heb. word (*kĕsîl*) is used in the singular in Am. v. 8; Job ix. 9, xxxviii. 31, of a particular constellation, probably Orion (but according to another tradition, the star

shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in
his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to
11 shine. And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the
wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of
the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the
12 terrible. I will make a man more rare than fine gold, even
13 a man than the pure gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make
the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of
her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the
14 day of his fierce anger. And it shall come to pass, that
as the chased [1]roe, and as sheep that no man gathereth,
they shall turn every man to his own people, and shall flee
15 every man to his own land. Every one that is found shall
be thrust through; and every one that is [2]taken shall fall by
16 the sword. Their infants also shall be dashed in pieces

[1] Or, *gazelle* [2] Or, *joined* thereunto

Canopus). Its meaning, "fool" or "foolhardy rebel," seems to point to some legend of a Titan chained to the sky for his defiance of the gods (Job xxxviii. 31). In the plural ("the Orions") it denotes here Orion and other constellations that vie with it in brilliancy.

11, 12. Jehovah is again the speaker, as in *v.* 3. The prophet has already in *v.* 9 intimated the purpose of the judgement; here the thought is added that in its execution the existing generation will be all but exterminated; so wide-spread is the wickedness and tyranny of the world.

12. *fine gold...pure gold*] In the original these are two rare and poetic synonyms for "gold" simply.

13. By the outbreak of Jehovah's wrath the material universe is shaken to its foundations. Such representations are common in the descriptions of the day of the Lord, and are not to be dismissed as merely figurative. Cf. ch. ii. 12 ff.

I will.. tremble] Change the form of the verb to read **the heavens shall tremble.**

14 16. The dispersion and slaughter of the population of Babylon. The prophecy from this point becomes more explicit in its main reference to Babylon.

14. Those who flee to their own land are the foreign residents who had been attracted by the wealth and commerce of Babylon from all parts of the world; cf. xlvii. 15; Jer. li. 44; Nah. ii. 8, iii. 16.

sheep that no man gathereth] Better: **a flock with none to gather it**, Nah. iii. 18. For the figure cf. 1 Kings xxii. 17; Ez. xxxiv. 5; Matt. ix. 36.

15. *Every one that is found*] Either the natives of Babylon, who had no land to flee to, or foreigners whom the judgement overtakes there.

before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against 17
them, which shall not regard silver, and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. And *their* bows shall dash the 18
young men in pieces; and they shall have no pity on the

16. Comp. Ps. cxxxvii. 8 f. That the capture of Babylon should be marked by the atrocities here spoken of was no doubt to be expected from the character of the Medes (*vv.* 17 f.), but no such crimes appear to have stained the actual victory of Cyrus. According to Babylonian records he took possession of the city peacefully. (*Records of the Past*, New Ser. v. 144 ff.) Cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 9; Nah. iii. 10; Hos. xiii. 16; 2 Kings viii. 12. The last half of the verse is repeated in Zech. xiv. 2.

17, 18. The description of the character of the invaders, perhaps even the mention of their name, is of the nature of a climax to the terrors of the picture.

17. *the Medes*] This Iranian people first became a leading power in Asia when it divided with the Chaldæans the spoils of the Assyrian Empire (B.C. 606), but it was not till the rise of the great conqueror Cyrus that it became a formidable enemy to Babylon. Cyrus, according to the classical historians, was originally a vassal king of the Median Empire, reigning over the narrow territory to which the name Persia or Persis was at first restricted. He is called, however, in Babylonian inscriptions, "King of Anzan," which is explained by Assyriologists to be a small kingdom in the north of Elam. (See Sayce, in *Rec. of the Past*, *l.c.*) About the year 549 he overthrew the ruling Median dynasty and placed himself at the head of the whole empire. It has been argued by some scholars that previous to that event there could be no expectation of a conquest of Babylon by the Medes, and that therefore the prophecy must be dated between 549 and 538. Others again hold that if it had been written after 549, the enemy would have been called the Persians. Both inferences, however, are inconclusive. The first overlooks the fact that before the accession of Cyrus the Medes were a powerful nation, and indeed the only probable human agents of a chastisement of Babylon. And against the second it has to be borne in mind that the name Persia, for the united empire, made its way slowly in antiquity. In the Bible it first becomes common in the time of Ezra, although long after that we still read of Medes *and* Persians (Dan. v. 28, vi. 8, 12) or Persians and Medes (Esth. i. 3, 14, 18). Greek writers also speak of the wars of independence against Xerxes as *τὰ Μηδικά*. The verse, therefore, furnishes no particular indication of the date of the prophecy.

which shall not regard (**regard not**) *silver*...] They cannot be bought off by a ransom. Xenophon puts into the mouth of Cyrus, in addressing the Medes, the words: *οὐ χρημάτων δεόμενοι σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐξήλθετε* (*Cyrop.* v. 1, 20).

18. *And...pieces*] The text here is corrupt.

fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.
19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the
Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom
20 and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall
it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall
the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make
21 their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert
shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful
creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and [1]satyrs shall

[1] Or, *he-goats*

19. *the Chaldeans' pride*] The territory of the Chaldæans lay near the head of the Persian Gulf. Their dominion over Babylon began with Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar.

as when God overthrew, &c.] See on i. 7 and cf. Am. iv. 11, where the same phrase occurs (also Jer. l. 40).

20—22. Babylon, after its overthrow, shall be a perpetual desolation.

20. *the Arabian*] Cf. Jer. iii. 2. The word seems originally to mean "dweller in the desert," but ultimately acquired the force of a proper name (see Jer. xxv. 24; 2 Chr. ix. 14, &c.). The site of Babylon will be shunned even by the wandering nomad, as an accursed and "uncanny" place.

21, 22. It shall be haunted by wild beasts and creatures of demon kind, like the *jinn* of the Arabs. See ch. xxxiv. 11—15; Zeph. ii. 14 f.; Jer. l. 39, li. 37.

21. *wild beasts of the desert*] The word used means strictly "dwellers in the desert" and is applied to men in ch. xxiii. 13; Ps. lxxii. 9. In ch. xxxiv. 14 it seems to denote a particular kind of desert creature.

doleful creatures] Probably "howlers," but what kind of howlers are meant is altogether uncertain. Some render "owls," others "jackals," &c. The word does not occur elsewhere.

ostriches] xxxiv. 13, xliii. 20; Mic. i. 8; Job xxx. 29, &c. The Heb. name (*bĕnôth ya'ănah*), as explained by Wetzstein (see Delitzsch, *Comm. on Job*, 2nd ed., Eng. Tr., vol. II., p. 340), means "daughters of the desert." The Arabs have a similar designation for the bird,—*abû es-ṣaḥârâ*, "father of the desert."

satyrs shall dance there] The noun also means "he-goats" (see marg.), as in Gen. xxxvii. 31; but the old translations have mostly perceived that goat-shaped demons are here intended (so also in ch. xxxiv. 14), the same beings to which Jewish superstition offered sacrifices (Lev. xvii. 7; 2 Chron. xi. 15—A.V. "devils"). The transition from the natural to the supernatural seems strange to our minds, but in the East the belief in weird creatures (*jinn*) inhabiting waste places and dangerous spots is a commonplace.

dance there. And [1]wolves shall [2]cry in their castles, and 22
jackals in the pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come,
and her days shall not be prolonged. For the LORD will 14
have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and
set them in their own land: and the stranger shall join
himself with them, and they shall cleave to the house of
Jacob. And the peoples shall take them, and bring them 2
to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them
in the land of the LORD for servants and for handmaids:
and they shall take them captive, whose captives they were;
and they shall rule over their oppressors.

And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD 3
shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy trouble,
and from the hard service wherein thou wast made to serve,
that thou shalt take up this parable against the king of 4

[1] Heb. *howling creatures.* [2] Or, *answer*

22. *wolves*] The word has certainly nothing to do with that for "island" (A.V.). It probably comes from another root meaning "to howl"; but again it is impossible to specify the particular animal.

castles] The Heb. word is *'almānōth*, "widows" (see A.V.). It is either a by-form or a copyist's error for *'armānōthāw*, **its palaces** (see ch. xxxiv. 13).

Chap. XIV. **1—23** contains (1) an Introduction connecting the ode with the preceding prophecy (*vv.* 1—4 *a*). (2) a song of triumph over the king of Babylon (*vv.* 4*b*—21), (3) an Epilogue (*vv.* 22, 23).

1. The immediate result of the judgement on Babylon will be the emancipation of Israel from captivity.

will yet choose Israel] Rather, **will again choose**, as formerly in Egypt (cf. Zech. ii. 12).

the stranger] **the sojourner**, or protected guest; here used, as in later Hebrew, with the sense of "proselyte": ch. lvi. 3—7; Zech. ii. 11, viii. 21—23.

2. *And the peoples*] **And peoples** (ch. xlix. 22 f.).

shall possess them] Lit. "serve themselves heirs to them" (Lev. xxv. 46). For the idea cf. ch. lx. 10, 14, lxi. 5.

they shall take them captive, whose captives they were] Jud. v. 12.

3. *thy trouble*] **thy unrest**; cf. Job iii. 18, 26.

the hard service] From Ex. i. 14. The analogy of the Egyptian oppression is prominent in the writer's thoughts.

4. *this parable*] The Hebrew word (*mashal*) is used in a variety of senses. Originally signifying a similitude, it came naturally to denote a popular proverb or gnomic saying, and finally acquired the sense of a satire or **taunt-song**, as here (Mic. ii. 4; Hab. ii. 6; Num. xxi. 27).

Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the
5 [1]golden city ceased! The LORD hath broken the staff of the

[1] Or, *exactress*

In ancient Israel wit seems to have passed into sarcasm as readily as in more recent times. The poem which follows might with equal propriety be described as a dirge (*kînah*, θρῆνος in LXX.), commencing as it does with the characteristic word *'êkh*, and exhibiting the peculiarity of the elegiac measure (see on ch. i. 21). Such ironical elegies are common in the prophets of the exile. Another striking example will meet us in ch. xlvii.

4*b*—21. The song of triumph over the king of Babylon is one of the finest specimens of Hebrew poetry which the Old Testament contains. A division into regular strophes, each containing seven long lines, is distinctly recognisable in *vv.* 4*b*—15 (three strophes), and may be assumed for *vv.* 16—21 (two strophes), although there the equality is more doubtful, being obscured (probably) by defects in the text.

It is difficult to know whether the subject apostrophised throughout the poem be an individual monarch or the Babylonian State personified. Since Nebuchadnezzar (604—561 B.C.) is little likely to be the king addressed, and since none of his successors seem to have been sufficiently distinguished to call forth such intensity of feeling, it would be most natural, on the assumption that the ode was composed towards the close of the Exile, to think that we have here a personification of the tyrannous might of Babylon. But a good deal of support has recently been given to the theory that the original poem was written on the occasion of the death of an *Assyrian* king (Sargon or Sennacherib), and was adapted by the exilic editor to the fall of Babylon (*v.* 4*a*). Of positive evidence for this theory very little can be adduced, and it would seem to necessitate the exclusion of the final strophe (*vv.* 20*b*, 21) from the original composition. It has, nevertheless, a certain attractiveness, especially in the case of Sennacherib, the barbarities of whose later career would justify, better perhaps than any other known episode, the spirit of fierce execration that breathes through the poems (see Staerk, *Das assyrische Weltreich*, pp. 144 ff., and Cobb in *Journ. of Bibl. Lit.* xv. [1896], pp. 18 ff.). If this view could be substantiated, the author of the song would be one of Isaiah's younger contemporaries.

4*b*—8. The first strophe is like a sigh of relief breathed by the whole of creation, when the disturber of its peace has vanished from the scene.

4. The line may be rendered:

How is the oppressor stilled,—stilled the insolent rage!

The translation *golden city* is an attempt to render the received text, but can hardly be justified. Some ancient versions read instead of *madhēbāh*, *marhēbāh*, a word which combines the ideas of restlessness and insolence (see ch. iii. 5).

wicked, the sceptre of the rulers; [1]that smote the peoples in 6
wrath with a continual stroke, that ruled the nations in
anger, with a persecution that none restrained. The whole 7
earth is at rest, *and* is quiet: they break forth into singing.
Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, 8
saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up
against us. [2]Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet 9
thee at thy coming: it stirreth up [3]the dead for thee, even
all the [4]chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their
thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall answer 10
and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we?
art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down 11

[1] Or, *he that smote...is persecuted, and none hindereth*
[2] Heb. *Sheol.* [3] Or, *the shades* Heb. *Rephaim.*
[4] Heb. *he-goats.*

5. *the rulers*] here used in the sense of **tyrants.**

6. *with a persecution that none restrained*] The parallelism requires instead of "persecution" a noun cognate with the verb of the sentence as in the preceding line. An easy emendation (*mirdath* for *murdâph*) supplies this; and this reading is almost universally accepted. The balance of clauses is then perfect:—

That struck peoples in anger,—with incessant stroke;
That trod down nations in wrath,—with unrestrained tread.

7. *they break forth into singing*] A favourite expression in the second part of the book: ch. xliv. 23, xlix. 13, liv. 1, lv. 12.

8. *the fir trees*] Some render "cypresses."

no feller is come up] Assyrian kings frequently mention among their exploits the cutting of trees in Lebanon and Amanus. Nebuchadnezzar, whose inscriptions have been found on Lebanon, is represented as doing the same thing.

9—11. The second strophe forms an effective contrast to the first. He who had so long troubled the earth becomes a disturbing presence in the under-world; the earth is now at rest, Sheol is troubled.

9. *Hell from beneath*] Rather, **Sheol beneath.** It is best to retain the Hebrew name of the under-world (*she'ôl*) as is sometimes done by the Revisers, though not in this passage. An almost exact equivalent would be the Greek *Hades*. For *the dead*, render **the shades** (*rĕphâ'îm*) as in marg.

the chief ones] lit. "the he-goats," a figurative designation of kings (Jer. l. 8; Zech. x. 3).

11. It is doubtful whether this verse continues the address of the shades. It certainly does not extend further.

to [1]hell, *and* the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread
12 under thee, and worms cover thee. How art thou fallen
from heaven, O day star, son of the morning! how art
thou cut down to the ground, which didst lay low the
13 nations! And thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend
into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the
14 uttermost parts of the north: I will ascend above the

[1] Heb. *Sheol.*

For *hell* read **Sheol.** *the noise of thy viols*] possibly indicating that the king had been cut down suddenly at a riotous feast (see xxi. 5; Dan. v.).

the worm is spread under thee, and worms **are thy covering**] (The Heb. uses two distinct words for "worm.") His lot is far worse than that of other potentates. No kingly throne is reserved for him in Sheol, but as one who has been denied honourable burial on earth (*v.* 19) he is laid in the "recesses of the pit" (*v.* 15) and makes his bed in corruption.

12—15. The third strophe contains the poet's reflexion on the sudden fall of the king of Babylon. That he should go to Sheol at all was a fate never contemplated by his soaring and self-deifying pride. The conception is borrowed from some Babylonian astral myth, in which a radiant star-demon was represented as presumptuously aiming at supreme deity, and as paying the penalty of his ambition by being cast down to the underworld. A similar use of foreign mythology is found in Ez. xxviii. 1—10.

12. *O day star, son of the* **dawn**] The translation of Vulg. and A.V. "Lucifer" (light-bearer) is quite correct, and is needlessly abandoned by the R.V. The Heb. word (*hêlēl*), which is wrongly regarded by some as a proper name, comes from a verb meaning "to shine" (xiii. 10; Job xxix. 3, xxxi. 26, xli. 10), and is strictly rendered "Shining One." The reference to the planet Venus (described in Assyrian by the epithet *mušlilul* = "shining") is by far the most probable; though it has also been taken to mean the new moon (Arab, *hilāl*), or even the waning lunar crescent as seen at dawn. By some of the fathers the passage was applied to the fall of Satan (cf. Luke x. 18); hence the current use of Lucifer as a name of the devil.

13, 14. Not content with his exalted position the king aspired to equality of rank with the great gods. A similar impiety is put by Ezekiel into the mouth of the prince of Tyre (Ez. xxviii. 2, 6, 9, 14).

13. *the mount of congregation,...north*] Render: **the Mount of Assembly in the uttermost north.** Comp. "mountain of God" in Ez. xxviii. 14, and "uttermost north" in Ps. xlviii. 2. We have here an allusion to Babylonian mythology which is partly elucidated by Assyrian inscriptions. There the chief gods are spoken of as born in

heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet 15
thou shalt be brought down to [1]hell, to the uttermost parts
of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon 16
thee, they shall consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that
made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that 17
made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities
thereof; that let not loose his prisoners to their home? All 18

[1] Heb. *Sheol.*

"the house of the mountain-summit of the lands, the mountain of *Arâlû*" (Schrader, *Cuneif. Inscr., ad loc.*). According to Jensen (*Kosmologie der Babylonier*, pp. 201 ff.) the idea of the "world-mountain" originated in the conception that the earth is itself a huge hollow mountain, resting on the primeval ocean. However that may be, there is little room for doubt that the "mount of assembly" in this verse is a divine mountain like the Greek Olympus, situated in the extreme north, where the great gods assemble. The opinion once prevalent that Zion is denoted was suggested by the phrase in Ps. xlviii. 2; but the idea is obviously out of place in the present context.

I will sit] i.e. **be enthroned**, as Ps. xxix. 10, etc.

14. *I will be like the most High*] Better: **I will make myself like to the Most High.** The sense of all the previous metaphors is gathered up in this sentence. The king arrogates to himself divine honour.

15. *thou shalt be brought down to* **Sheol**] Such is the end of the "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself." The Babylonian Hades was conceived as an underground realm; the *pit* is a synonym for Sheol, and the *uttermost parts of the pit* are its innost recesses, the most dismal part of a land of darkness. These apparently are reserved for those who have not obtained honourable burial on earth (see below on *vv.* 18—20).

16—19. The fourth strophe. The scene here is no longer in Hades, but on the battle-field, where the dead body of the king lies unburied, exposed to the derision of men.

17. *let not loose his prisoners to their home*] (a so-called pregnant construction). From this point the rhythm is defective, and the text is almost certainly in some disorder. The immediate difficulty might be surmounted by bringing the words "every one in his house" from the end of *v.* 18 (where they are rhythmically superfluous) to the end of *v.* 17: thus (with a slight alteration):—

"That let not loose his prisoners,—each to his home."

But an anti-climax remains, and a satisfactory reconstruction of the passage as a whole seems impossible.

18, 19. The contrast here is that between the honourable burial accorded to other kings and the indignity to which the king of Babylon is subjected by being deprived of sepulchral rites.

the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, every
19 one in his own house. But thou art cast forth away from
thy sepulchre like an abominable branch, [1]clothed with the
slain, that are thrust through with the sword, that go down
to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under foot.
20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou
hast destroyed thy land, thou hast slain thy people; the
21 seed of evil-doers shall not be named for ever. Prepare ye
[2]slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers;

[1] Or, as *the raiment of those that are slain*
[2] Or, *a place of slaughter*

18. *every one in his own house*] This yields a perfectly good sense as it stands, the "house" being the tomb prepared by the king in his lifetime. But it forms a short half-line where a long one is required by the measure; hence the proposal to transfer the words to *v.* 17 (see on that verse).

19. *cast forth away from thy sepulchre*] i.e. flung out unburied. The idea that the body had been *disinterred* is inconsistent with *v.* 20.

like an abominable branch] A worthless scion of the family. It is perhaps better to read with Symmachus (ἔκτρωμα) and the Targ. "like a hateful abortion" (נפל for נצר).

clothed with (i.e. "covered by") *the slain*] on the field of battle.

that go down to the stones of the pit] A difficult expression. A reference to the pit of Sheol (*v.* 15) is hardly to be expected in this place. In its present position the clause is most naturally understood of the hasty and ignominious burial of a dead enemy by casting stones on the body (cf. 2 Sam. xviii. 17). Some propose to transfer the words to the beginning of *v.* 20, where they would open a new strophe, thus:—

"Those that are buried in graves of stone,—with them shalt
thou not be united [in sepulture]."

On this view the words must be a synonym for honourable sepulture, and the "stones of the pit" would denote stone-built tombs. This seems a less satisfying sense.

20, 21. The fifth strophe. The guilt of the king of Babylon, which descends like a curse on his children and leads to their extermination. The impression of textual confusion is confirmed by the fact that no clear strophic division can be traced at this point.

20. *Thou shalt not be joined with them*] i.e. either with the kings of the nations (*v.* 18) or (if the transposition mentioned be adopted) with those who lie in stone sepulchres.

thou hast destroyed thy land...] The king has acted as a tyrant not only to Israel but to his own people. It is not implied that the king had actually brought about the downfall of his nation and empire.

21. *slaughter*] Or, **a place of slaughter** (marg.).

that they rise not up, and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities. And I will rise up against 22

that they rise not up, and possess the earth] May no descendants of the tyrant survive to perpetuate his iniquities!

fill the face of the world with cities] This could hardly be reckoned a crime, for it would be undoing the wrong that their father had wrought (*v.* 17). Some render "enemies" or gain that sense by an emendation. Others change the word *'ārîm* (cities) into *'iyyîm* (ruined heaps). The easiest correction is simply to omit the word, the sense and rhythm being complete without it.

The elegy ends here.—The passage just considered (*vv.* 9—20) bears a close resemblance to Ezekiel's dirge over the fall of Pharaoh and his host (Ez. xxxii. 19 ff.). Many questions of great interest and importance are suggested by both. The most important is how far such representations are to be taken as expressing the fixed belief of the writers or their age with regard to the state after death. Their affinities with Babylonian speculation on that subject, taken in connexion with the fact that such elaborate descriptions of the underworld do not occur before the Exile, may indicate that the imagination of the writers had been influenced by their contact with the religion of their conquerors. In that case it may be reasonable to suppose that they freely availed themselves of the material thus laid to their hand merely as poetic imagery, without meaning to attribute strict objective reality to all the conceptions. At the same time there was a common basis of belief underlying the Hebrew and Babylonian ideas regarding the future state, and all that is essential to the understanding of this passage was probably familiar to the minds of the Israelites before the Exile. In the conception as here presented the following points are to be noted. (1) Sheol, which is figured as a vast subterranean region, is the common gathering-place of all the dead. They exist there as shades, *rĕphā'îm* (*v.* 9), a word which is usually explained to mean "feeble ones,"—weak, pithless adumbrations of the living form. These are represented as capable of being roused to a transient interest in human affairs by the arrival amongst them of so distinguished a personage as the king of Babylon; but their ordinary condition is one of utter inactivity, a sort of conscious death rather than life. It is true that the writer speaks only of kings and potentates, and throws little light on the state of the common man after death. Still the Old Testament as a whole knows nothing of separate spheres of existence for the righteous and for the wicked, and that idea is certainly not to be imported into the present passage. (2) We seem to find a clear trace of the antique notion that the lot of the shade in Sheol depends on the fate of the body on earth. The kings who have received due interment sit each on his throne retaining the semblance of their former greatness, while he who was "cast forth away from his sepulchre" is relegated to the "recesses of the pit." This, however, is connected with the conviction that the fate of the body is not accidental; a dishonoured death expresses the final judgement

them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, and son and son's son, saith the LORD.
23 I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts.

of God on a career of exceptional wickedness. And it is this judgement of God, executed on earth, which is regarded as reflected and perpetuated in the condition of the disembodied spirit. (3) In this way the idea of retribution is extended to the other world. There is indeed an essential difference between the application of the principle here given and that to which a fuller revelation has led us. As we have seen, the retribution here spoken of is only the counterpart of a retribution already manifest on earth, whereas we have learned to look to the future life to redress the inequalities of the present, and to bring about a perfect correspondence between character and destiny, never realised in this world.

22, 23. The Epilogue, going back on the concluding threat of ch. xiii.

22. *son and son's son*] An alliterative phrase (*nîn wānéked*) recurring in Gen. xxi. 23; Job xviii. 19; Sir. xli. 5, xlvii. 22. The proper translation is **progeny and offspring**. In old English "nephew" (A.V.) means "grandson." Comp. Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, ii. 8. 29:—

> But from the grandsyre to the nephewes sonne,
> And all his seede, the curse doth often cleave.

23. *the porcupine*] (ch. xxxiv. 11; Zeph. ii. 14). So rendered in accordance with the LXX. and Vulg. and the analogy of Arabic. But the "bittern" (A.V.) certainly suits the scene better, and it is said to have the hedgehog's trick of rolling itself up into an unrecognisable mass. (Tristram, *Natural History of the Bible*, p. 243.)

pools of water] marshes, caused by the overflow of the Euphrates when the dykes and canals were no longer kept in repair.

CH. XIV. 24—32. TWO ISAIANIC FRAGMENTS.

i. *vv.* 24—27. An announcement of Jehovah's purpose to destroy the Assyrians on the soil of Canaan. In spite of the absence of a title these verses cannot be explained as a continuation of the oracle on Babylon, from which they are separated by the concluding formula of *v.* 23, and the opening formula of *v.* 24. They bear every evidence of being a genuine prophecy of Isaiah; and both in form and substance they shew an obvious resemblance to those of ch. x. 5 ff. and ch. xvii. 12 ff., xviii. Some critics, indeed, regard them as a misplaced fragment of one or other of these chapters; but that is a baseless combination. We may, however, with confidence assign the passage to the same period of Isaiah's ministry, namely the early years of Sennacherib's reign.

The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have 24
thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed,
so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, 25
and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall
his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off
their shoulder. This is the purpose that is purposed upon 26
the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out
upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath pur- 27
posed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched
out, and who shall turn it back?

24. *The LORD of hosts hath sworn*] cf. Am. iv. 2, vi. 8, viii. 7; Is. xlv. 23, liv. 9, lxii. 8. This formula is nowhere else used by Isaiah, and is wanting here in the LXX., which takes the last words of *v.* 23 as the introduction to this oracle.

I have thought] or **meant**: the verb is the same as that used of the Assyrian in ch. x. 7.

come to pass...stand] Combined as in ch. vii. 7.

25. *my mountains*] i.e. the mountain land of Palestine.

then shall his yoke depart...] See ch. ix. 4, x. 27. Here the two clauses are probably interpolated: they weaken the transition to the following verse; and moreover the possessive pronouns ("his," "their") have no antecedent.

26, 27. This plan of Jehovah embraces the destinies of all nations (see ch. xxviii. 22, x. 23, viii. 9). The expression "the whole earth" is not to be restricted to the Assyrian Empire, nor on the other hand is the meaning that all other peoples shall suffer the same fate as Assyria; it is simply that the event announced is of world-wide importance, and affects the interests of humanity at large. This indeed followed from the ambitious designs of Assyria, which could not stop short of universal empire. But Isaiah no doubt looked deeper than this, and thought of its bearings on the religious future of mankind. The two verses are a striking testimony to the grandeur of Isaiah's conception of the Divine government.

this is the hand that is stretched out] cf. *v.* 26, ch. v. 25, ix. 12, &c.

ii. *vv.* 28—32. An oracle on Philistia. The Philistines, who are rejoicing at the fall of some cruel oppressor, are warned that the dreaded power will soon be re-established in a more terrible form than ever (*v.* 29). A contrast is then drawn between the miserable fate of the Philistines and the peace and security in store for Israel (*v.* 30). In *v.* 31 the warning is repeated, and it is indicated that the formidable enemy is one who comes from the north. Meanwhile ambassadors from a foreign people (no doubt the Philistines) are in Jerusalem awaiting an answer to their proposals; and the prophet gives the answer in the name of Jehovah, as he does in the case of the Ethiopian envoys in

28 In the year that king Ahaz died was this [1]burden.
29 Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that
smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall
come forth a [2]basilisk, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying

[1] Or, *oracle* [2] Or, *adder*

ch. xviii. There is no reason to question the Isaianic origin of the prophecy.

The situation which best combines the various allusions of the prophecy would be the death of some Assyrian monarch, which in Isaiah's time was invariably the signal for active conspiracy among the states of Palestine (Introd., pp. xvi, xxxv). Winckler's theory, that the Philistines were thrown into excitement by news of a defeat of Sargon by the Elamites at Dur-ilu in 721, has little plausibility. That the broken rod is Ahaz and the future oppressor Hezekiah, is in no way suggested by the title, and is excluded by *v.* 31, where the invasion is said to come from the north. It is still less natural to suppose that the rod is a Jewish dominion, and the threatened danger an Assyrian supremacy, because *v.* 29 implies that the new tyranny springs from the same root as the old. Assuming, then, that two successive Assyrian kings are meant, there are three occasions within the lifetime of Isaiah which satisfy the conditions required by the prophecy: the death of Tiglath-pileser IV in 727; of Shalmaneser V in 722; and of Sargon in 705. It is difficult with the data at our disposal to decide between these periods. Two of the monarchs named had certainly ravaged the Philistine territory, and it is quite probable (although we have no positive proof of the fact) that Shalmaneser did so also; the death of each was followed by an outbreak of disaffection in which the Philistines took a leading part; and at any time Isaiah would have given the advice to his countrymen which he virtually gives here. On the last occasion we might perhaps have expected a reference to the overthrow of Assyria, as in the answer to the Ethiopians about the same time (ch. xviii.). Either of the two first mentioned events corresponds approximately with one of the dates assigned for the death of Ahaz (727 or 720), and would therefore go far to vindicate the accuracy of the superscription.

28. The superscription. The word "burden" (*massā'*) makes it somewhat improbable that the heading was written by Isaiah. It may nevertheless embody a sound tradition.

the year that king Ahaz died] Cf. ch. vi. 1. Probably 720 B.C. (but see Chronological Note, pp. lxxxi ff.).

Each verse of the short oracle forms a strophe of four lines.

29. *Philistia, all of thee*] "*All* Philistia" is addressed because the country was broken up into a number of cantons, which might not always be united in political sentiment, as they are at this time.

the rod that smote thee] Cf. ix. 4, x. 5, 24, xiv. 6. On the reference see introductory note above.

a basilisk] Heb. *ẓepha'* only here; probably the same as *ziph'ōnî* (see on xi. 8).

serpent. And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the 30
needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with
famine, and thy remnant shall be slain. Howl, O gate; cry, 31
O city: thou art melted away, O Philistia, all of thee; for
there cometh a smoke out of the north, and 'none standeth
aloof at his appointed times. What then shall one answer 32
the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded

[1] Or, *there is no straggler in his ranks*

fiery flying serpent] **flying saraph**. See on ch. vi. 2 and cf. xxx. 6. It is probably a creation of the popular imagination, here used poetically. The sense of the metaphors is obvious: the power from which the Philistines had suffered seems at present to have received a fatal blow, but it will recover itself and assume a more deadly form than ever.

30. While Philistia is utterly destroyed, Israel enjoys perfect security under Jehovah's protection (see *v.* 32). The first two lines must refer to the state of things after the judgement: Isaiah could not at any time have predicted that Judah as a whole would be spared the horrors of invasion.

the firstborn of the poor] must be explained as a superlative (cf. Job xviii. 13)—"the poorest of the poor." But many commentators prefer, by slightly altering the word for "firstborn," to read "in my meadow (בְּכָרִי) the poor shall feed" (cf. xxx. 23); others "on my mountains" (בהרי). Gray suggests בדד as a suitable parallel to לבטח in the next line, and renders "the poor shall feed by themselves" (unmolested).

thy root] LXX. "thy seed" gives a much better sense.

shall be slain] Or, changing a consonant, **I will slay**. In any case, the agent is still Jehovah, not the Assyrian.

31. As in *v.* 29 the prophet had rebuked the premature rejoicing of the Philistines, so here he calls them to public lamentation in view of the advancing enemy.

thou art melted away] Render as an imper. (inf. abs.) **melt away, entire Philistia!** *Smoke* may be either a symbol of war (Jer. i. 13 f., x. 22, xlvii. 2) or it may be a vivid picture of the burning villages that mark the track of the invader. The phrase *from the north* (cf. Jer. i. 14, x. 22, xlvii. 2) points almost unmistakeably to the Assyrians (see on ch. x. 27).

and none...times] Most critics render as R.V. marg.: **there is no straggler in his ranks** (cf. ch. v. 27). The last word does not occur elsewhere, but probably means "appointed place."

32. The oracle ends, in a manner characteristic of Isaiah, with a piece of practical advice to the political leaders of the state. Some words have probably dropped out of the first half of the verse.

the messengers of the nation] are no doubt Philistine envoys endeavouring to negotiate an alliance with Judah. They are probably to be regarded as actually waiting in Jerusalem while the court deliberates

Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge.

on the expediency of joining the rebellion. The prophet's answer is unhesitating.

That the LORD *hath founded Zion*] A leading principle of Isaiah's ministry; see on ch. viii. 18, xxviii. 16, and Introduction, pp. lxvii. ff.

in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge] Zion, the actual city, is the secure retreat of the Remnant that shall turn to Jehovah. The words are of great significance as shewing how the two ideas of the Remnant and of the inviolability of Jerusalem combined in Isaiah's mind at a particular period of his career. See Introd., p. lxviii.

Ch. XV. XVI. An Oracle on Moab.

These chapters describe a terrible disaster which has overtaken, or is about to overtake, the proud and hitherto prosperous nation of Moab. Ch. xvi. 13 f. is a postscript, which states unambiguously that an earlier prophecy is here taken up and reaffirmed in its substance, the time of its fulfilment being fixed within a term of three years. The language leaves it uncertain whether the original composition was strictly a prophecy or a poetic lament over a visitation which the writer had actually witnessed. The element of prediction appears in xv. 9 and xvi. 2, 12; but the rest of the passage reads like a description of current events, and certainly exhibits a most minute and accurate knowledge of the geography of the trans-Jordanic region. The writer betrays a certain (ironical?) sympathy with the misfortunes of Moab, although he expresses the conviction that the notorious arrogance of that people demanded a retribution such as it has experienced.

The question of date and authorship is complicated by the peculiar form in which the oracle is presented. It is obvious that the Epilogue (xvi. 13 f.) belongs to a later date than the body of the prophecy, and there is nothing whatever to suggest that both are from the same author. The internal evidence, indeed, is strongly opposed to such an hypothesis. While the Epilogue bears some marks of Isaiah's rapid and pregnant style, the original oracle (xv. 1—xvi. 12) presents a singular contrast to the prophecies of Isaiah. The pathetic, elegiac strain of this passage, its outflow of purely human sympathy towards the victims of the calamity, its poverty in religious ideas, and its diffuse and laboured style, combine to stamp it with a character foreign to his genius. And this general impression is confirmed by an examination of the vocabulary, which differs widely from that of Isaiah. On these and other grounds many critics since Gesenius have been led to the conclusion that we have here the work of some unknown prophet, which was republished by Isaiah with an appendix from his own hand.

With regard to the date of the original prophecy the chief indications are these: (1) Although the assailants of Moab are nowhere named, we

may infer from the fact that the fugitives took refuge in Edom (see on xv. 7, xvi. 1), that their country had been invaded from the north. (2) The territory of Moab extended at this time N. of the Arnon, and thus included a region claimed by the Hebrew tribes of Reuben and Gad (see on 7. 1). This was *certainly* the case in the end of the ninth century, when Mesha expelled the Israelites from that region, and again at the beginning of the sixth (Ez. xxv. 6); and *possibly* during the early reign of Jeroboam II (see next head). (3) It also appears from xvi. 1—6 that at this time a strong monarch sat on the throne of Judah and held the Edomites in subjection (see the notes below). This last circumstance would seem to take us back at least to the days of Uzziah, the suzerainty of Edom having been lost in the beginning of the reign of Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 6) and never recovered during the pre-exilic period. Perhaps the most plausible conjecture that has been offered is that of Hitzig (adopted by a number of subsequent commentators), that the prophecy refers to the subjugation of Moab by the North Israelites under Jeroboam II, the contemporary of Uzziah. It is true that there is no particular mention of this campaign in the Old Testament, but we know that Jeroboam extended the boundaries of his kingdom to the "sea of the Arabah" (2 Ki. xiv. 25; Am. vi. 14), and it is reasonable to suppose that this involved an invasion of Moab. In every respect the circumstances of the time are in harmony with the allusions of the prophecy. Hitzig's further suggestion, however, that the author was Jonah the son of Amittai (2 Ki. xiv. 25), though ingenious, rests on no very solid foundation. There are two earlier wars of North Israel against Moab which might conceivably be thought of in this connexion. One is the conquest of the country by Omri in the ninth century, known to us from the famous Moabite Stone, which commemorates the war of revenge waged by Mesha against Ahab. The other is the campaign of Jehoram, Ahab's son, in alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah (2 Ki. iii.). This can hardly be the occasion of the prophecy, since at that time Judah took part in the subjugation of Moab, and would not be likely to be appealed to by the fugitives for succour (xvi. 1 ff.). Nevertheless the Biblical account of that campaign throws a valuable light on some features of the passage, and illustrates the barbarity with which these frontier wars were conducted. We read that the allies "beat down the cities; and on every good piece of land they cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the fountains of water, and felled all the good trees: until in Kir-hareseth only they left the stones thereof" (2 Ki. iii. 25). We can readily suppose that Jeroboam's invasion was carried out with equal thoroughness.

This theory of the origin of the poem, though in our opinion the most probable (so Sellin, Gressmann, Steuernagel), is abandoned by many recent critics (e.g. Duhm, Marti, Gray, &c.) in favour of a post-exilic date. These writers think the occasion of the elegy was the Nabatean conquest of Moab (from the S. or S.E.!) which must have taken place at some time between the fifth and second centuries B.C. The exegetical data are perhaps too uncertain to justify a confident rejection of this

15 The [1]burden of Moab.

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*

hypothesis. But after 735 B.C. there is no trace of a Judean suzerainty over Edom till we come down to the time of John Hyrcanus (135—104). Hence we must either sacrifice the unity of the passage, by treating xvi. 1 ff. as a later insertion, or else bring the whole down to the end of the second century. So late a date is very improbable. Moreover, since in all probability the Nabateans were in possession of Edomite territory before they overran Moab, a *southward* flight of Moabite refugees would only have thrown them into the arms of their enemy.

The date of the Epilogue is much more uncertain. The evidence of Isaiah's authorship is so slight as to be negligible. All that can be safely said is that, assuming the original poem to belong to the reign of Jeroboam II, the age of Isaiah would be a not unsuitable period for such a prediction to be appended, in which case there would be no doubt that the writer had the Assyrians in view as the agents of the Divine sentence against Moab.

We divide the passage into three sections:

i. Ch. xv. The distress of Moab. In one night her two chief cities have been ruined (*v.* 1); the sanctuaries are crowded with despairing suppliants, and a cry of agony ascends from all her public places (2—4). The fugitives are then seen making their way through the desolate country, and collecting their possessions at the brook of the Arabah, in order to carry them over into Edom (5—7). For the war-cry has circled round the whole land so that no refuge can be found within it (8), and yet worse things are in store for the survivors (9, xvi. 2).

ii. Ch. xvi. 1—6. Moab vainly seeks protection from Jerusalem. From Edom the fugitives are represented as sending a present (*v.* 1) to Jerusalem, along with a piteous and flattering appeal to the Jewish monarchy (3, 4; *v.* 2 appears to break the connexion) whose glories are extolled in terms almost worthy of a Messianic prophecy (5). But the petition is rejected because of the well-known pride and faithlessness of the Moabitish nationality (6).

iii. xvi. 7—12. There thus remains no hope for Moab, and the poet once more strikes up a lamentation over the ruined vineyards of the once fertile country where the vintage song is now stilled for ever (7—10). The personal sympathy of the writer finds clearer expression here than in the earlier part of the poem (9, 11); although his last word must be a religious application of the calamity of Moab as proving the impotence of its national deities (12).

The parallel prophecy on Moab in Jer. xlviii. is a greatly amplified variation of this ancient oracle. With the exception of xv. 1, xv. 8—xvi. 5 and xvi. 12 ff. nearly every verse in these two chapters occurs in a more or less altered form in Jeremiah (the references are given in the notes below).

1. The verse stands somewhat apart from the sequel of the poem. It announces the catastrophe which has placed the entire country at the

For [1]in a night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to
nought; for [1]in a night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and*
brought to nought. [2]He is gone up to [3]Bayith, and to 2

[1] Or, *in the night*
[2] Or, *Bayith and Dibon are gone up to the high places*
[3] Or, *the temple*

mercy of the invaders, viz. the fall of the two chief cities of Moab. What follows is a description, not of the further progress of the campaign, but first of the universal mourning caused by this sudden blow, and second, of the flight of the inhabitants. The opening word *because* seems to have the force of an interjection, equivalent to "yea" or "surely."

The verse may be read:

Yea, in a night is 'Ar laid waste—Moab undone!
Yea, in a night is Kir laid waste—Moab undone!

in a night] may be meant literally (by a night attack), or "in a single night," i.e. "suddenly."

Ar] the capital of Moab, also called *'Ir* (Num. xxii. 36), lay on the Arnon (Num. xxi. 15, 28; Deut. ii. 9, 18, 29). It is not to be confounded (as is sometimes done) with the later capital Rabba, which lies about 10 miles further south. *Kir* is perhaps identical with *Kir-hareseth* or *Kir-heres* (ch. xvi. 7, 11; 2 Ki. iii. 25), which is supposed to be the modern Kerak, some 17 miles S. of the Arnon; its situation has always been considered well-nigh impregnable. These two cities were both S. of the Arnon and therefore within the proper territory of Moab. Those mentioned in *vv.* 2–4, on the other hand, were in the fertile district to the north (now called El-Belḳa), which Israel claimed for the tribes of Reuben and Gad. The possession of this coveted tract of country was one great motive of the wars between the two nations. Mesha's inscription on the Moabite Stone is really an account of the reconquest of this region from Ahab[1]. At the time of the prophecy Moab must have held undisputed possession of these lands.

2—4. The wailing of Moab.

2. (Cf. Jer. xlviii. 37.) *He is gone up...to weep*] The sense of the clause is uncertain. If *Bayith* be a proper name the best rendering would be that of marg. **Bayith and Dibon are gone up**.... But *Bayith* enters so frequently into compound place-names in this region (*Beth-Diblathaim*, *Beth-Baal-meon*, *Beth-Bamoth*) that it is hardly likely to have been used alone of a particular town. Some accordingly take it in its ordinary sense of "house" (here "temple") and translate, "He is gone up to the temple, and Dibon to the high places...,"—a very harsh construction. The most satisfactory solution of the difficulty is that proposed by Duhm, who changes *bayith* into *bath* and

[1] See Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, III. 406.

Dibon, to the high places, to weep: Moab howleth [1]over
Nebo, and [1]over Medeba: on all their heads is baldness,
3 every beard is cut off. In their streets they gird them-
selves with sackcloth: on their housetops, and in their
4 broad places, every one howleth, weeping abundantly. And
Heshbon crieth out, and Elealeh; their voice is heard even
unto Jahaz: therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud;
5 his soul trembleth within him. My heart crieth out for

[1] Or, *upon*

reads **the daughter of Dibon** (Jer. xlviii. 18) **is gone up to the high places to weep.** The "high places" are of course the local sanctuaries.

Dibon (where the Moabite Stone was found) is only a few miles N. of the Arnon, and is naturally the first to receive tidings of the fall of the southern fortresses.

Moab...Medeba] Better **On Nebo and on Medeba doth Moab howl.** *howleth* is a peculiar onomatopoetic form occurring also in *v.* 3 and xvi. 7.

Nebo] is a town near the mountain of the same name. It lay due east of the mouth of the Jordan; *Medeba* a short distance to the S.E. Both towns are mentioned on the Moabite Stone.

on all their heads is baldness...] On the signs of mourning mentioned here and in *v.* 3 see ch. iii. 24, xxii. 12; Mic. i. 16; Job i. 20; Jer. xli. 5.

3. (Jer. xlviii. 37 f.) *on their housetops*] See on xxii. 1.

weeping abundantly] lit. "going down in weeping," an unusually strong figure. In other passages the eye is said to "go down in tears" (Jer. ix. 18; Lam. i. 16, iii. 48); but nowhere else is the whole being spoken of as dissolved in weeping.

4. (Cf. Jer. xlviii. 34.) *Heshbon* and *Elealeh* (often mentioned together) are respectively about 4 and 6 miles N.E. of Nebo. Heshbon, once the capital of the Amorites (Num. xxi. 26) and afterwards an Israelitish city (Num. xxxii. 37; Josh. xiii. 17, xxi. 39), is at the time of the prophecy in the possession of Moab. The site of *Jahaz*, where Sihon gave battle to the Israelites (Num. xxi. 23), has not been discovered; probably it was some distance south from Heshbon, near Dibon.

the armed men of Moab cry aloud] Cf. ch. xxxiii. 7. The "heroes of Moab" are mentioned in a similar plight in Jer. xlviii. 41. But the LXX., vocalising differently, reads **the loins of Moab**, which affords a better parallel to the next line. The verb must then be assimilated to the following, **tremble.**

5—9. The flight of the Moabites.

5. (Jer. xlviii. 34, 5, 3.) The new theme is introduced by an expression of the writer's sympathy with the homeless fugitives: *My heart crieth out for Moab* (cf. xvi. 9, 11).

Moab: her [1]nobles *flee* unto Zoar, [2]to Eglath-shelishiyah:
for by the ascent of Luhith with weeping they go up; for in
the way of Horonaim they raise up a cry of destruction.
For the waters of Nimrim shall be [3]desolate: for the grass 6
is withered away, the tender grass faileth, there is no green
thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and 7

[1] Or, as otherwise read, *fugitives*
[2] Or, as *an heifer of three years old*
[3] Heb. *desolations*.

her nobles] The word as pointed means "bolts," which is here taken as a symbol for princes. But it is better, with the Targum and many modern commentators, to change the vowel, and translate (as marg.) "fugitives" as in xliii. 14. The want of a verb renders the sense very precarious, and the first half of the verse is too corrupt to be intelligible.

Zoar (Gen. xix. 22) lies near the S.E. corner of the Dead Sea; the flight therefore is southward, towards Edom.

Eglath-shelishiyah] i.e. probably, "the third Eglath," is apparently the name of some unknown locality (cf. Jer. xlviii. 34).

the ascent of Luhith is located by Eusebius' Onomasticon between Rabba and Zoar.

the way of Horonaim] Jeremiah (xlviii. 5) speaks of "the *slope* of H.," which lay apparently (v. 34) between Zoar and Eglath-shelishiyah.

6. (Jer. xlviii. 34.) *the waters of Nimrim* are generally supposed to be connected with Beth-nimrah (Num. xxxii. 36), now Tell-nimrin, on the Wadi Shaib, flowing into the Jordan about 8 miles from its mouth. A place in the south of Moab would perhaps suit the context better, and explorers have found a Wadi Numeirah running into the Dead Sea a little south of Kerak. Eusebius also (Onomast.) says that the place was known in his day under the name Βηνναμαρείμ (= the Heb. *mê Nimrîm*, "waters of N."), and lay to the N. of Zoar. On the stopping of the waters by an enemy, see 2 Ki. iii. 25.

7. (Jer. xlviii. 36.) The fugitives have now reached the border of their own land, and prepare to cross into Edom. The boundary between the two countries was formed by the Wadi el-Ahsa ("valley of water-pits," the scene of the miracle in 2 Ki. iii. 16 ff. See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Ch.* p. 147). In all probability this Wadi is identical with *the brook of the willows* here mentioned. There is, however, some doubt about the correct translation of the name, arising from its similarity to the "brook of the wilderness" in Am. vi. 14 (here pl. *'ărābîm*, there sing. *'ărābāh*. Cf. 2 Ki. xiv. 25 "sea of the *'ărābāh*"). Some regard the word here as an irregular pl. of that used by Amos, and render "brook of the wastes." But the two brooks are not necessarily identical, and even if they are, the translation "willows" (or rather, "poplars") is perhaps to be preferred. Cf. ch. xliv. 4; Ps. cxxxvii. 2, &c., for the name of the tree.

the abundance] is lit. "surplus" (a ἅπ. λεγ.) *that...laid*

that which they have laid up, shall they carry away [1]to the
8 brook of the willows. For the cry is gone round about
the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim,
9 and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim. For the waters of
Dimon are full of blood: for I will bring yet more upon
Dimon, a lion upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon
the remnant of the land.

[1] Or, *over*

up is in Heb. a single word, meaning something entrusted for safe keeping. Instead of *carry away to* read **carry over.**

8. Summing up the effect of the previous description and explaining the forsaking of the land.

the cry (of destruction, *v.* 5) *is gone round...*] We should expect the two places in the second half of the verse to mark the extreme limits of the country—the "Dan and Beersheba" of Moab. *Eglaim* is probably the village Αἰγαλείμ mentioned by Eusebius as lying 8 Roman miles S. of Rabba. *Beer-elim* ("well of the mighty ones"?) is unknown, but has been plausibly identified with the "well" (*Bĕ'ēr*) of Num. xxi. 16—18, in northern Moab.

9. *the waters of Dimon*] *Dimon* is generally supposed to be another form of *Dibon*, chosen for the sake of an alliteration with the word for "blood" (*dām*). The conjecture may be taken for what it is worth; it has the authority of Jerome, who says, "usque hodie indifferenter et Dimon et Dibon hoc oppidulum dicitur," and we know of no other place Dimon.

I will bring yet more (lit. "additional [evils]") *upon Dimon*] This is the first strictly prophetic utterance in the passage; the speaker is Jehovah.

a lion... Moab] The "lion" is thought to be a symbol for a terrible conqueror, though it is difficult to say who is meant. It can hardly be Jeroboam II, who has already done his worst, and it is still less likely that Judah is meant. Perhaps the word is to be taken collectively, and in its literal sense (cf. 2 Ki. xvii. 25). The peculiar prophetic form of the latter part of the verse has suggested to some commentators that it may have been inserted by the editor in the original oracle. If the editor was a contemporary of Isaiah, the "lion" might denote the Assyrians.

Ch. XVI.

1—6. Arrived in Edom, the Moabitish refugees are within the sphere of Judah's political influence (see Introd. Note). Their first anxiety, therefore, is to secure protection and the right of asylum by sending an embassy to Jerusalem.

Send ye the lambs for the ruler of the land from [1]Sela 16
[2]*which is* toward the wilderness, unto the mount of the
daughter of Zion. For it shall be that, as wandering birds, 2
as a scattered nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be at
the fords of Arnon. Give counsel, execute judgement; 3

[1] Or, *Petra* [2] Or, *to*

1. *Send ye the lambs*] The imper. expresses dramatically the result of the deliberations of the Moabites. The word "lamb" (Heb.) is to be taken collectively; it denotes the tribute in kind which the Moabites had been accustomed to pay to the kings of Israel (2 Ki. iii. 4), but which they now propose to send to the king of Judah, the "ruler of the land" (of Edom).

from Sela...wilderness] The wilderness is the desert tract between Sela and Jerusalem which would have to be traversed by the messengers of Moab. *Sela* ("rock"), a city of Edom captured by Amaziah of Judah (2 Ki. xiv. 7), is commonly supposed from the identity of the designations to be the later Petra. There is, however, no positive evidence in support of the identification; and Jud. i. 36 seems to point to a locality near the southern end of the Dead Sea. (See Moore, *Commentary on Judges*, pp. 56 f.)

the mount...Zion] ch. x. 32.

2. The verse gives no good sense in its present position. Not only does it obscure the connexion between *v.* 1 and *v.* 3, but its language of prediction reveals an affinity with xv. 9. It has probably been misplaced, and the fact that the Moabites are represented as at "the fords of Arnon," instead of in Edom, confirms the impression that the order has been disturbed. Duhm places it after xv. 8 at the end of the first division of the poem (deleting xv. 9), while Gressmann makes xv. 9*b*, xvi. 2 the concluding lines of the second division (after xvi. 6). The images of the *wandering birds* and the *scattered nest* remind us of Isaiah (ch. x. 14, xxxi. 5). The *daughters of Moab* are the provincial towns of Moab, or their inhabitants (cf. Ps. xlviii. 11).

3—5. The address of Moab, through its ambassadors, to the court of Judah. Most of the older commentators took a different view of these verses, holding that here the prophet points out to the Moabites the way of national salvation through the practice of righteousness, and exhorts them in particular to shew kindness to any Israelitish refugees who might seek a home in that country. This interpretation appears to be followed by the A.V. (see on *v.* 4). But such an exhortation is altogether out of keeping with the tone of the prophecy, and would be very ill-timed in the circumstances to which Moab was then reduced. The continuity of thought is far better maintained on the view given above, which is that of most recent scholars.

3. *Give counsel, execute judgement*] Or, **Apply counsel, make decision**; i.e. "adopt wise and effectual measures to defend us from our enemies."

make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon-
4 day: hide the outcasts; bewray not the wanderer. [1]Let
mine outcasts dwell with thee; as for Moab, be thou a
covert to him from the face of the spoiler: for [2]the extor-
tioner is brought to nought, spoiling ceaseth, [3]the oppressors
5 are consumed out of the land. And a throne shall be esta-
blished in mercy, and one shall sit thereon in truth, in the
tent of David; judging, and seeking judgement, and swift
to do righteousness.

[1] According to many ancient versions, *Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee; be thou &c.*

[2] Or, *extortion* [3] Heb. *the treaders down.*

make thy shadow as the night...] Be to us as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (ch. xxxii. 2).

bewray not] lit. "uncover not."

4. *Let mine outcasts dwell with thee...*] Rather (see marg.), **Let the outcasts of Moab sojourn with thee** (as protected guests). This implies a slight change of the vowel points, but has the authority of the chief ancient versions in its favour. The A.V. is a correct translation of the text as pointed, and far preferable to that of R.V., which joins the word Moab to the next clause, a construction unnatural in the extreme, although suggested by the Heb. accents. The vocative use of "Moab" in A.V., and probably also in the Massoretic text, implies that *vv.* 3—5 are conceived as an address to the Moabites.

for the extortioner is brought to nought...] The rest of the verse cannot, in this form, be uttered by the Moabites. We may either suppose with Dillmann that a word meaning "until" has been lost, or (better) with Hitzig take the clauses as protasis to *v.* 5, "for *when* the extortioner, &c." This is perhaps preferable to regarding it as a reflexion of the prophet himself.

the extortioner] read with Duhm חָמֹץ for הַמֵּץ (ἁπ. λεγ.).

spoiling] Better **spoiler** (reading שֹׁדֵד).

5. *And a throne...*] If we follow Hitzig's view of *v.* 4 this would be rendered "then the throne...." The phraseology of the verse is Messianic (see esp. ch. ix. 6) but not exclusively so (cf. Prov. viii. 28). In the lips of the Moabites the language is that of extravagant and (as *v.* 6 appears to intimate) insincere adulation. It implies an offer of perpetual submission on the part of the Moabites to the Davidic dynasty, and therefore the question whether the throne be that of Judah or that of Moab is perhaps immaterial.

and one shall sit...judging] Better: **and there shall sit upon it in faithfulness in the tabernacle of David** (cf. Am. ix. 11) **one who judgeth**, &c. The phrase "in the tent of David" looks like a gloss.

swift to do righteousness] Or "expert in justice."

We have heard of the pride of Moab, *that* he is very 6
proud; even of his arrogancy, and his pride, and his wrath;
his boastings are nought. Therefore shall Moab howl for 7
Moab, every one shall howl: for the [1]raisin-cakes of Kir-
hareseth shall ye mourn, utterly stricken. For the fields of 8
Heshbon languish, *and* the vine of Sibmah; [2]the lords
of the nations have broken down the choice plants thereof;
they reached even unto Jazer, they wandered into the

[1] Or, *foundations*
[1] Or, *her choice plants did break down the lords of nations*

6. (Jer. xlviii. 29, 30.) The prayer is rejected. The writer, speaking in the name of his countrymen, exposes the hollowness of Moab's professions of allegiance and submission, as altogether opposed to the arrogant spirit for which the nation was notorious. On the pride of Moab cf. (besides Jer. xlviii. 29) ch. xxv. 11; Zeph. ii. 8. The national spirit has found an enduring monument in the inscription of the Moabite Stone.

his boastings are nought] Better: **the unreality of his pratings** (a contemptuous word, cf. ch. xliv. 25).

7, 8. (Cf. Jer. xlviii. 31, 32.) Moab's last hope being thus disappointed, the poet resumes his lament over the doomed people.

7. *every one*] lit. "the whole of it."

raisin-cakes] These cakes of compressed grapes are mentioned less as an article of commerce than as a delicacy used at religious feasts (cf. Hos. iii. 1, R.V.). The word never means "foundations" (marg.). The parallel passage in Jeremiah substitutes the tamer "men." *Kir-hareseth* is the same as Kir-heres (*v.* 11) and perhaps identical with Kir of Moab (xv. 1).

utterly stricken] apposition to "ye."

8. *the fields*] a rare word meaning here as in Deut. xxxii. 32 "vineyards."

the vine of Sibmah] Sibmah, in the vicinity of Heshbon, must have been famous for a choice variety of vines, which are here described by a title resembling that used in ch. v. 2 for the "choicest vine" of Jehovah's vineyard.

the lords of the nations...thereof] Better: **whose choice grapes struck down** (i.e. intoxicated) **the lords of the nations.** For the figure see ch. xxviii. 1. The wine of Sibmah was found on the tables of princes far and near, and its potent effects were well known.

The remainder of the verse celebrates the extensive cultivation of this variety of the vine on the east of the Jordan. The writer is not thinking of anything so prosaic as the export trade in the wine of Sibmah; he represents the whole vine culture of the district under the image of a single vine, which **reached to Jazer** in the north, **strayed to the desert** on the east, and **passed over the (Dead) Sea** on the west.

wilderness; her branches were spread abroad, they passed
9 over the sea. Therefore I will weep with the weeping of
Jazer for the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my
tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for upon thy summer
10 fruits and upon thy harvest the *battle* shout is fallen. And
gladness is taken away, and joy out of the fruitful field;
and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither joy-
ful noise: no treader shall tread out wine in the presses;
11 I have made the *vintage* shout to cease. Wherefore my
bowels sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward
12 parts for Kir-heres. And it shall come to pass, when Moab
presenteth himself, when he wearieth himself upon the high
place, and shall come to his sanctuary to pray, that he shall
not prevail.

9—11. The poet gives vent to his sympathy for Moab. These verses are amongst the most beautiful in the poem.

9. (Jer. xlviii. 32.) *with the weeping of Jazer*] i.e. in sympathy with the weeping of Jazer. *I will water thee*] lit. **drench thee.** *for upon thy summer fruits* (or rather "fruit-gathering") *and upon thy harvest the* battle *shout is fallen*] The word for "shout" (*hêdâā*) is used both of the joyous shout of the wine-treaders (Jer. xxv. 30) and of the wild war-cry of soldiers in a charge (Jer. li. 14). It has the former sense in *v.* 10, but (according to most) the latter here. The clause might, however, be rendered "the (vintage) shout has fallen away." "Harvest" is used for "vintage" (*ḳâẓîr* for *bâẓîr*) as in ch. xviii. 5 (see the note).

10. (Jer. xlviii. 33.) *no treader shall tread out wine*] i.e. there shall be none treading wine. In the last clause—"I have stilled"—the voice of Jehovah is again heard; some critics, however, read "is stilled," which is preferable.

11. (Jer. xlviii. 36.) *my bowels sound like a harp*] The poet's emotion flows forth spontaneously in the strains of the elegy. The *bowels* are the seat of the more intense emotions (Job xxx. 27), especially of compassion (Jer. iv. 19, xxxi. 20; Cant. v. 4). *Kir-heres*] See on *v.* 7.

12. The failure of Moab's religious confidence. The verse reproduces the thought of xv. 2, at the beginning of the elegy. It reads thus: **and when Moab [appears, when he] wearies himself upon the high place, and enters his sanctuary to pray, he shall prevail nothing.** The bracketed words should probably be omitted as due to dittography. Ewald, however, turns the verse into a promise of the conversion of Moab, by continuing the protasis to the end of the present text, and completing the sense as follows (guided by Jer. xlviii. 13):... "and

This is the word that the LORD spake concerning Moab 13
in time past. But now the LORD hath spoken, saying, 14
Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the
glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his
great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and
of no account.

prevails nothing, **then he shall be ashamed of Chemosh, and turn to Jehovah.**"

13, 14. The Epilogue. See Introductory Note.

13. *in time past*] The expression is used both of the recent past (as in 2 Sam. xv. 34) and of a remote or even immemorial past (as Prov. viii. 22; Ps. xciii. 2). The sense here is indeterminate.

14. If ch. xv. 1—xvi. 12 describe real events, the verse shews that in the interval Moab had recovered some measure of its former prosperity.

as the years of an hireling] As the hireling serves for the stipulated time, but not a moment longer, so the judgement on Moab shall not be deferred beyond the space of three years (cf. ch. xxi. 16).

the glory of Moab (*v.* 6)] Cf. x. 16, xxi. 16.

the remnant...account] lit. "the remnant shall be small, little (ch. x. 25, xxix. 17—of time), not strong." It is hazardous to assume that the "remnant" here is the nucleus of a regenerated Messianic community.

CH. XVII. 1—11. THE APPROACHING OVERTHROW OF DAMASCUS AND NORTH ISRAEL.

This oracle, the Isaianic authorship of which is beyond question, should be read *after* ch. ix. 8—21 and *before* ch. vii. It deals mainly with the fate of the Northern Kingdom; but the combination of Syria and Ephraim in one prophecy shews that the league between these two nations had already been formed. With a serenity of faith which is more akin to the contemptuous attitude of ch. vii. 4 than to the impassioned utterances of ix. 8 ff., the prophet discloses the inevitable issues of an alliance based on practical rejection of Jehovah and the adoption of foreign idolatries (*vv.* 10 f.). The date is certainly prior to the Assyrian conquest of Damascus (c. 732), and since there is no mention of the outbreak of hostilities against Judah, we may fix it in the early days of the coalition (c. 735).

The passage divides itself into three strophes:—

i. *vv.* 1—3. An announcement of the impending ruin of the kingdom of Damascus, Israel's bulwark against the Assyrians.

ii. *vv.* 4—6. A figurative description of the fate of Ephraim: his strength shall be consumed until only an insignificant remnant is left.

[*vv.* 7, 8. The effect of this display of the Divine power on men's religious attitude. These verses are interpolated.]

iii. *vv.* 9—11. The judgement is shewn to be the fruit of Israel's apostasy and devotion to heathen cults.

17 The [1]burden of Damascus.
Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and
2 it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are for-
saken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and
3 none shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall
cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom [2]from Damascus,
and the remnant of Syria; they shall be as the glory of the
children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*
[2] Or, *from Damascus; and the remnant of Syria shall &c.*

1—3. The fate of Damascus.

1. *The burden of Damascus*] See on ch. xiii. 1. The title explains why the prophecy was included amongst those against foreign nations, but is not quite accurate as a description of its contents. The overthrow of Damascus, although mentioned first, is but an incident of the humiliation of its ally Ephraim, which is the principal theme of the oracle.

a ruinous heap] The words in Heb. are in apposition; the second (*mē'ī*) is an anomalous formation, is wanting in the LXX., and is to be rejected as a dittography of *mē'ir* in the previous line. Render simply **a ruin** (as xxiii. 13, xxv. 2).

2. *The cities of Aroer*] Hardly, "the (two) cities Aroer" (gen. of appos.), as a name for the trans-Jordanic territory. If Aroer be really a proper name, the phrase must be explained by the analogy of Jos. xiii. 17 "the daughter cities of A." But where was Aroer? The best-known town of the name, that on the Arnon (Num. xxxii. 34; Deut. ii. 36, &c.), is much too far south and belonged to Moab. There seems to have been another in Ammon (Jos. xiii. 25), but it too is outside the territory of Damascus and can scarcely have been important enough to give its name to a district. The first two words must be emended (partly after the LXX.) to read עזבת עד and must be read as the continuation of v. 1: [**a ruin**] **deserted for ever**. The third word (emended to ערית) begins a new line: **Its cities** (those of Damascus) [*shall be for flocks*]. So Gray after Duhm.

shall be for flocks...afraid] cf. v. 17, xxxii. 14, and Zeph. iii. 13; Job xi. 19.

3. *The fortress also...Ephraim*] Better: **And the bulwark shall be removed from Ephraim**, meaning the kingdom of Damascus, which had been like a breakwater, sheltering Israel from the Assyrian onslaught. It is *possible* to understand the "fortress" of Samaria, or collectively of the fortified cities of North Israel; but the mention of Samaria would be premature in this stanza, which deals with the ruin of Syria.

the kingdom] **the sovereignty.**

and the remnant of Syria; they shall be] R.V. here follows the accentuation of the Hebrew; it is better to neglect it and render as marg.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the glory of 4
Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall
wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth 5
the standing corn, and his arm reapeth the ears; yea, it
shall be as when one gleaneth ears in the valley of Rephaim.
Yet there shall be left therein gleanings, as the [1]shaking of 6
an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the upper-
most bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a
fruitful tree, saith the LORD, the God of Israel. In that 7
day shall a man look unto his Maker, and his eyes shall

[1] Heb. *beating.*

and the remnant of Syria shall be, &c., letting the first member of the verse end with "Damascus."

4–6. The fate of Ephraim, in three figures: wasting disease; the reaping of corn; the gathering of olives.

4. *in that day*] simultaneously with the judgement on Syria. *the glory of Jacob*] i.e. his might, his population, his prosperity, &c. (cf. *v.* 3). *made thin*] better, **enfeebled**. *fatness...lean*] cf. ch. x. 16.

5. The succeeding pictures are exceedingly graphic,—an evidence of Isaiah's intense interest in rural life. The reaper gathers the stalks of wheat with one hand and with the other he cuts off the ears close to the head.

the harvestman] Read *kōṣēr*.

yea, it shall be...Rephaim] See Ruth ii. 2, 7, 15 ff. The "valley of Rephaim" (="valley of the giants"), Jos. xv. 8, xviii. 16 (cf. 2 Sam. v. 18, 22, xxiii. 13), a fertile plain to the south of Jerusalem where Isaiah had watched the reapers and gleaners at work.

6. *as* **at** *the* **beating** *of an olive tree*] The olives were struck down from the higher branches with a stick (ch. xxiv. 13; Deut. xxiv. 20); **the few that were overlooked were left for the poor.**

the uppermost bough] The Heb. word does not occur again except in *v.* 9, where the text is almost certainly wrong.

the branches of **the** *fruitful tree*] (omitting "outmost"). The last word contains perhaps a traditional play on the name Ephraim (Gen. xlix. 22; Hos. xiii. 15?).

7, 8. These verses do not point to a conversion of the few surviving Ephraimites. They rather describe the impression produced by the vindication of Jehovah's righteousness on mankind at large. Both in thought and structure, they interrupt the continuity of the oracle, and may have been inserted later (perhaps by the prophet himself). When they are removed we have three equal strophes, the first two ending with a "saith Jehovah," and the last two beginning with "in that day."

a man] Rather **men** (mankind).

7. *look unto his Maker*] cf. xxii. 11. "Look to," i.e. regard with trust and veneration.

8 have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not
look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall
he have respect to that which his fingers have made, either
9 the Asherim, or the sun-images. In that day shall his
strong cities be as the forsaken places [1] in the wood and on
the mountain top, which were forsaken from before the

[1] The Sept. reads, *of the Amorites and the Hivites.*

8. *the work of his hands...that which his fingers have made*] phrases used of idols in ch. ii. 8, 20, xxxi. 7, xxxvii. 19; cf. Hos. xiv. 4; Mic. v. 12; Deut. iv. 28.

the altars...either the Asherim, or the sun-images] These words overburden the rhythm of the verse and are probably explanatory glosses. An allusion to the brazen-altar of Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 10—13) is far-fetched, even if not absolutely excluded by the date. The two last-mentioned objects are never referred to by Isaiah.

the Asherim] The *Ashērāh* or Sacred Pole was an emblem of divinity which seems to have stood regularly by the side of the altar in a Canaanitish sanctuary (Ex. xxxiv. 13; Jud. vi. 25 ff.; Deut. xvi. 21; 2 Ki. xviii. 4, &c.). It is regarded by some as an artificial survival of the sacred tree, under which the altar originally stood; by others as the symbol of a Canaanitish goddess of the same name, who may have been, however, an impersonation of the material symbol here referred to.

sun-images] probably **sun-pillars**. The word (*hammānīm*, pl.) only occurs in ch. xxvii. 9; 2 Chr. xiv. 5, xxxiv. 4, 7; Ez. vi. 4, 6; Lev. xxvi. 30. It seems to be connected with Baal-Hammān, a Phœnician deity (best known from the Carthaginian inscriptions) whose name appears to designate him as "Lord of the sun's heat" (cf. the Hebrew *hammāh* used in poetry of the sun: Ps. xix. 6; Job xxx. 28; Cant. vi. 10; Is. xxiv. 23, xxx. 26). The "sun-pillars" were probably emblems of this deity. See Cooke, *North Semitic Inscr.*, no. 136: "this hammān, and this altar...to Shemesh (the sun-god)."

9—11. Continued from *v.* 6. The rejection of Jehovah leads to failure and disappointment.

9. *his strong cities*] Or (slightly changing the text) "thy cities of refuge." The word for "[his] refuge" is not read by LXX., which substitutes "are forsaken." See next note.

in the wood and on the mountain top] For "wood" cf. 1 Sam. xxiii. 15, 19; 2 Chr. xxvii. 4; Ez. xxxi. 3 ("shroud"). "Mountain top" is the word rendered "uppermost bough" in *v.* 6. But the LXX. gives the clue to the true text, which reads **of the Amorite and the Hivvite** (see marg.). This alone gives an intelligible force to the next clause, and the textual change is comparatively slight save that the two words have been transposed ("Hivvite and Amorite").

which were forsaken from before] More strictly, **which they forsook before**, &c. The passive "were forsaken" is only adopted because the

children of Israel: and it shall be a desolation. For thou 10
hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been
mindful of the rock of thy [1]strength; therefore thou plantest
[2]pleasant plants, and settest it with [3]strange slips: in the 11
day of thy planting thou hedgest it in, and in the morning
thou makest thy seed to blossom: but the harvest [4]fleeth
away in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

[1] Or, *strong hold*
[2] Or, *plantings of Adonis*
[3] Or, *vine slips of a strange* god
[4] Or, *shall be a heap*

previous clause contains no suitable subject; the LXX. reading supplies this defect, and at the same time makes the reference clear. Duhm now deletes the whole of this historical allusion as a gloss, and translates *v.* 9: "In that day [shall all thy] cities of refuge [be forsaken]," continuing the sentence in *v.* 10.

10. *God of thy salvation*] The only occasion on which this important term (Heb. *yeshaʿ*) is used by Isaiah, although it forms an element of his own name.

rock of thy **refuge**] "Rock," a very frequent title of God, cf. ch. xxx. 29, xliv. 8 (R.V.); Deut. xxxii. (*passim*); Ps. xix. 14, xxvii. 5, xxxi. 2, 3, &c.

therefore thou **mayest plant** *pleasant plants*] The new sentence begins here. R.V. marg. gives **plantings of Adonis**. The supposed reference is to the Adonis-gardens mentioned by Greek writers (see Plato, *Phaedrus* 276). They were "pots of quickly withering flowers which the ancients used to set at their doors or in the courts of temples." It cannot be denied that such an allusion furnishes the most striking image of the futility of all human projects which (like the Syro-Ephraimitish alliance) are not grounded in the eternal purpose of Jehovah. The only question is whether it is a fair interpretation of the text. Now, there are a number of scattered proofs, slight but very interesting, that the deity known to the Greeks as Adonis, and to the Hebrews as Tammuz (Ez. viii. 14), actually bore the name here rendered "pleasant" (*Naʿămān*). It has been suggested, e.g. that the *anemone*, the flower sacred to Adonis, derives its name from this title of the god; and in Arabic the red anemone is called by a name which is explained to mean "wounds of Adonis." For other arguments see Cheyne, *SBOT*, p. 146. Adonis being a Syrian deity, his worship in Israel was a necessary consequence of the alliance with Damascus, and was practised chiefly by women (Ez. viii. 14). The rendering may at least be accepted as giving significance to a metaphor which is otherwise somewhat colourless.

set *it with strange slips*] or, **plant it with cuttings of a strange (god)**; "cuttings" or "sprigs" from a verb meaning "to prune."

11. The verse may be rendered: **In the day of thy planting thou mayest make it to grow, and in the morning of thy sowing make it to blossom: the harvest disappears in a day of sickness and**

12 Ah, the [1]uproar of many peoples, which roar like the
roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush
13 like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush
like the rushing of many waters: but he shall rebuke [2]them,

[1] Or, *multitude* [2] Heb. *him.*

incurable sorrow. "However successful your enterprise may seem in its early stages, it is doomed to failure." The words *planting* and *seed* in R.V. must be construed alike, both are taken above as infinitives. The word for "disappears" (נָבֵל) means "heap" in Ex. xv. 8; Ps. xxxiii. 7, lxxviii. 13 (and so A.V. here). But here it is better taken as a verb; R.V. rightly "fleeth away."

Ch. XVII. 12—14. The Sudden Annihilation of the Assyrians.

These verses are regarded by some critics as the continuation of ch. xvii. 1—11, by others as the introduction to ch. xviii. Since the reference here is undoubtedly to the Assyrians, the first view has nothing to commend it, the transition being too sudden and abrupt. The second view, in spite of identity of subject and a certain similarity in form with ch. xviii., is also improbable because of the well-marked conclusion in *v.* 14 and the completeness of ch. xviii. in itself. It is better, therefore, to treat the passage as a short independent oracle springing from the same situation as ch. xviii., and closely resembling that oracle in import.

12. "Isaiah on his 'watch-tower' hears, and we seem to hear with him, the ocean-like roar of the advancing Assyrian hosts" (Cheyne). Whether the invaders are already in the land, or are present only to the imagination of the prophet, it is impossible to determine. The first half of the verse should be rendered: **Ah, the roar of many peoples, That roar like the roaring of the sea.** For *rush...rushing*, render "bellow"..."bellowing" (cf. Wordsworth's "...and ocean bellows from his rocky shore"). The "many peoples" are the varied subject nationalities that furnished contingents to the Assyrian army. The comparison of such tumultuous masses of men to the noise of waters is frequent in the O.T.: cf. ch. v. 30, viii. 7; Jer. vi. 23, xlvi. 7 f.; Ps. lxv. 7.

13. The Assyrians shall perish at the rebuke of Jehovah. The first clause of the verse is almost identical with the last words of *v.* 12, and is wanting in the Peshito and a few Heb. MSS. It may have arisen through dittography, although some think the repetition rhetorically effective, contrasting the long-drawn-out terror of the invasion with the sharp and sudden visitation described in what follows.

but he shall rebuke them] Better: **but he** (Jehovah) **rebuketh it** (the tumult of nations). The following verbs should also be rendered as presents and in the singular number: **it fleeth...is chased.** The "rebuke" of Jehovah is His voice of thunder (Ps. civ. 7).

and [1]they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm. At eventide behold terror; *and* 14 before the morning [2]they are not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

[1] Heb. *he.* [2] Heb. *he is.*

chaff of the mountains] Threshing-floors were chosen by preference on elevated situations, free to the wind, which carried away the stubble without any artificial winnowing process.

the whirling dust] lit. "wheel" (as in Ps. lxxxiii. 13). It has been supposed that the object referred to is the large spherical growth (about a foot in diameter) of the wild artichoke, which, when withered in autumn breaks off at the ground, and rolls, light as a feather, like a wheel before the wind (see Thomson, *Land and Book* [1861], p. 563 f.).

For the figure, comp. ch. xxix. 5; Ps. i. 4, xxxv. 5, &c.

14. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be accomplished between evening and daybreak. The expression denotes a very short space of time, as in Ps. xxx. 5; Job xxvii. 19; but the destruction of Sennacherib's army took place literally in the night (ch. xxxvii. 36).

At eventime, behold terror! Before morning, it (the terror) **is gone!**

them that spoil us, &c.] the Assyrians; cf. ch. x. 6, 13.

Ch. XVIII. A Prophetic Charge to the Ethiopian Ambassadors.

The theme of this striking prophecy is, like that of the preceding, the impending overthrow of the Assyrian power; its peculiar dramatic form is explained by the occasion which suggested it. This appears to have been the arrival in Jerusalem of an embassy from the Ethiopian monarch, probably Shabaka, whose reign extended from about 711 to 700 B.C. The object of the embassy must have been either to form an alliance with Hezekiah against Assyria, or to encourage him in resistance by assurances of support. The only period at which such an incident is historically probable is that of the final rupture between Judah and Assyria—*certainly* before the battle of Eltekeh in 701. A date much earlier would be inconsistent with ch. xx., where (in 711) Isaiah predicts an Assyrian conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia. Here there is no trace of the fierce indignation with which the *Egyptian* negotiations are denounced in ch. xxviii.—xxxi.; the prophet does not seem to have anticipated that the proposals of Shabaka would be seriously entertained. All this seems to point to an early stage of the revolt against Sennacherib. On the other hand the tone of the oracle shews that events are fast hastening to the final decision. The purpose of Assyria is rapidly maturing; and the prophet has already reached the single-minded serenity of faith—untroubled by doubt of his people's moral condition—

18 Ah, the land [1]of the rustling of wings, which is beyond

[1] Or, *shadowing with wings*

which sustained him in the last crisis of Judah's fate. The date must be between 705 and 701. Isaiah's reply to the envoys is obviously intended as a guide to the policy of the king and his advisers. (See further Introd., pp. xvii, xxxix.) In that reply Isaiah exhibits a fine combination of the character of the statesman with that of the man of faith, of the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*. While the language breathes the courtly urbanity and respect due to distinguished strangers from a far country, we can easily read between the lines a firm rejection of their overtures. Jehovah, he says in effect, will crush the Assyrian in His own time without human help; and that signal judgement will be a demonstration to Ethiopia and all the world of His supreme Godhead.

The prophecy contains two equal strophes and an epilogue:

i. *vv.* 1—3. The prophet's message to Ethiopia, prefaced by an imaginative description of the mysterious land and its inhabitants. The message itself is contained in *v.* 3, and is an invitation to all nations of the earth to be spectators of Jehovah's crowning act of retribution on Assyria.

ii. *vv.* 4—6. The divine revelation on which this assurance is based. For it is as an inspired prophet that Isaiah thus ventures to guide the policy of his country at this critical juncture. The meaning of the figure is that Assyria shall be cut down, just when its gigantic plans of conquest seem to be maturing under the most favourable conditions.

iii. *v.* 7. The epilogue, describing the effect of this display of Jehovah's power on Ethiopia. Other embassies, of a far different character, shall then come from the remote land to do homage to the name of Jehovah at Mount Zion.

1—3. The charge to the Ethiopian envoys, along with a poetic description of the land and people. The tendency of the ancient world to idealise the Ethiopians is familiar to students of classical literature. To the Greeks they were the "blameless Ethiopians" (Homer), "the tallest and handsomest of all men" (Herodotus). Isaiah would seem to have been struck by the fine physique of the ambassadors, and perhaps it was their narrative that furnished his vivid imagination with the picturesque details crowded into these three verses.

1. The word rendered *Ah* is here neither a "cry of pity" nor (as usually in Isaiah) of indignation. It is simply a particle of salutation (*heus*) as in ch. lv. 1; Zech. ii. 6, 7 (10, 11 Heb.). Render: **Ha, the land,** &c.

the land of the rustling of wings] This is the most probable sense of a much disputed phrase. The Heb. noun for "rustling" (*ṣĕlāṣāl* or *ṣilṣal*) means a kind of "locust" (Deut. xxviii. 42), a "harpoon" (Job xli. 7, R.V. "fish-spears"), and a very similar form means "cymbals" (Ps. cl. 5). The common root-idea is that of "clanging" or "jingling"; and if the above translation be correct the allusion is to

the rivers of [1]Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the 2
sea, [2]even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters, *saying*, Go,
ye swift messengers, to a nation [3]tall and smooth, to a

[1] Heb. *Cush.* [2] Or, *and*
[3] Or, *dragged away and peeled*

the booming swarms of insects which abound in the Nile-lands. There may even be a special allusion to the dreaded Tsetse-fly, whose name among the Gallas (*zalzalja*) closely resembles the Heb. word here used. The expression is to be understood literally, not metaphorically of armed hosts. Something might be said for the notion of the LXX. and Targ. (land of winged ships) if it were justified philologically, and did not anticipate v. 2. Others render, "land with the shadow on both sides" (ἀμφίσκιος) a supposed allusion to the fact that between the tropics the shadow falls sometimes on the north and sometimes on the south. But this seems very fanciful.

beyond the rivers of Ethiopia] The phrase is repeated in Zeph. iii. 10. Ethiopia (*Kush*) is used in the Bible somewhat vaguely of the region south of Syene (Assouan), at the first cataract of the Nile (Ez. xxix. 10), corresponding generally to the modern Soudân ("land of the Blacks"). The empire of Shabaka which Isaiah has particularly in view, had its capital at Napata on the great westward bend of the Nile between Dongola and Berber. Hence it seems somewhat inappropriately described as lying "beyond" the "rivers" of Kush (i.e. the Nile itself and its numerous affluents, the Atbara, the Blue Nile, &c.); the most northerly of these tributaries being considerably S. of Napata. The description would be strictly applicable to Meroe, to which the Ethiopian capital was transferred in the 7th century B.C. Hence it is not unlikely that the words are a gloss, taken from Zeph. iii. 10 (Duhm and others).

2. The *ambassadors* (lvii. 9; Jer. xlix. 14; Pr. xiii. 17, xxv. 13) are those who have arrived in Jerusalem. They had descended the Nile (here called *the sea*, as in ch. xix. 5; Nah. iii. 8) in *vessels of papyrus*. These light skiffs, constructed for one or two passengers, and capable of being carried where the river ceased to be navigable, are mentioned by ancient writers (cf. Pliny XIII. 11 "ex ipso quidem papyro navigia texunt," and other authorities cited by Gesenius). Their great speed is referred to in Job ix. 26 ("ships of reed").

Go, ye swift messengers] Isaiah's charge to the ambassadors begins here; they are to return to their own country with this answer. (The "saying" of A.V. and R.V. is quite misleading.)

a nation tall and smooth] (lit. "drawn-out and polished"). The latter epithet probably denotes the bronze-like appearance of the skin of the Ethiopians; some, however, take it in the general sense of "beautiful" (*μέγιστοι καὶ κάλλιστοι*). The Nubians of the Soudân are still a remarkably tall and handsome race. The rendering of A.V. "scattered and peeled" (cf. R.V. marg.) rests on the inadmissible

people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation
[1]that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers
3 [2]divide! All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers
on the earth, when an ensign is lifted up on the mountains,
4 see ye; and when the trumpet is blown, hear ye. For
thus hath the LORD said unto me, I will be still, and I will
behold in my dwelling place; [3]like clear heat in sunshine,

[1] Or, *meted out and trodden down* Heb. *of line, line, and of treading down.*
[2] Or, *have spoiled* [3] Or, *when there is*

assumption that the verse contains the message to the Jews with which the envoys were charged on their departure from Ethiopia.

terrible from their beginning onward] Better: **dreaded near and far.** Lit., perhaps, "from where it is and onward," cf. 1 Sam. x. 3, xx. 22, 37. The temporal sense is possible (1 Sam. xviii. 9), although less natural here.

that meteth out and treadeth down] Render: **strong and victorious** (lit. "of strength and treading down"). The Heb. for "strength" presents some difficulty. If read as pointed (*kav-kav*) it looks like a repetition of the word for "measuring-line" (*kav*); and this is the origin of the "meting out" of E.V. ("people of line-line"). But this sense has little probability; and the translation "strength" is warranted by the analogy of the cognate Arabic noun *kuwwa*. It is perhaps better to read it as a reduplicated form (*kavkav*), although the word occurs nowhere else. Note that R.V. rightly takes both nouns in an active sense.

divide] The word is found only here and is of uncertain meaning. The most likely translation is "intersect."

3. This verse gives the message which the ambassadors are to carry home to their countrymen, although it concerns all the world as much as the Ethiopians.

Render: **when a signal is lifted up...when a trumpet is blown.** Cf. ch. xiii. 2. Since the whole process is supernatural it is idle to enquire what the "signal" and "trumpet" signify. The verse is simply a summons to be prepared for the moment of Jehovah's decisive intervention.

4—6. The purpose of Jehovah, as disclosed to Isaiah by special revelation. The opening words point back to a definite time when in a moment of ecstasy this illumination came to him.

4. *I will be still...will behold*] Better: **I will quietly look on,** the first verb being subordinate to the second.

like clear (or **dazzling**) *heat in* (or **above**) *sunshine*] The shimmering luminous heat of the noontide atmosphere in the height of the eastern summer seems to be conceived as something superadded to the effect of the sun's rays, and proceeding from the sphere of ethereal light which was widely regarded as the region of the divine (so Duhm).

like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the 5
harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becometh
a ripening grape, he shall cut off the sprigs with pruning-
hooks, and the spreading branches shall he take away *and*
cut down. They shall be left together unto the ravenous 6
birds of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth:
and the ravenous birds shall summer upon them, and
all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them. In 7
that time shall a present be brought unto the LORD of

like a cloud of dew] The Heb. word for "dew" means really a fine drizzling mist: what is meant is possibly the stationary *cirrus*-cloud in the upper air, which is called a "mist-cloud," in distinction from the rain-cloud near the earth (Duhm). Others take the reference to be to the night-mist "which is an invaluable feature of the hot season from May, and especially from August, to October" (Gray). This of course reduces both similes to *mere* comparisons; whereas Duhm's interpretation gives us the unity of a single natural impression as the basis of the ecstatic experience which brought illumination to the prophet's mind (see *v.* 4).

Both expressions are rightly construed as comparisons. The temporal construction suggested by marg. ("when there is, &c.") is barely possible in the first case, but not at all in the second. The points of comparison are apparently two: (1) the motionless stillness of the noon-tide heat and the fleecy cloud are an emblem of Jehovah's quiescence. (2) As these natural phenomena hasten the ripening of the fruit, so all providential agencies appear to further and mature the schemes of Assyria. But the development is suddenly arrested just before its fruition.

5. *when the blossom is over, and the flower becometh a ripening grape*] The Assyrian enterprise is here compared to a vine, ripening its grapes under the favourable influences indicated in *v.* 4. The word for *harvest* does not strictly denote "vintage" (see on ch. xvi. 9, xvii. 11); either the more general term is employed for the particular, or the vine is conceived as cut down at that stage of its growth which coincides with the (wheat-)harvest.

take away and *cut down*] Rather (to avoid a *hysteron-proteron*) **hew away**, the first verb having merely adverbial force.

6. The figure seems to be abandoned; instead of the "sprigs and branches" of the vine, we have the dead bodies of the Assyrian soldiers left as carrion for unclean beasts and birds. A ghastly picture, which is amplified, with somewhat gruesome details, in Ezek. xxxix. 11 ff.; cf. also Jer. vii. 33; 1 Sam. xvii. 46; 2 Sam. xxi. 10.

7. Ethiopia shall then pay homage to Jehovah at Mount Zion, the earthly seat of His sovereignty. The verse is usually regarded as a non-Isaianic addition.

a present] The word is rare, occurring again only in Ps. lxviii. 29,

hosts of a people tall and smooth, and from a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.

lxxvi. 11, in both passages coupled with the same poetic word as is here used for "brought."

of a people] Read **from** as in the next clause. The idea meant to be conveyed by the E.V. might be justified by an appeal to ch. xlv. 14, but it is far more likely that the preposition has been accidentally omitted in the Heb. text.

the place of the name of the LORD] See on xxx. 27; cf. 1 Ki. viii. 17; Deut. xii. 5, 11.

For other anticipations of the conversion of Ethiopia, cf. ch. xlv. 14; Zeph. iii. 10; Ps. lxviii. 31, lxxxvii. 4.

CH. XIX. AN ORACLE ON EGYPT.

It is recognised by all commentators that this chapter consists of two dissimilar parts; a poetic oracle (*vv.* 1—15) announcing the ruin of Egypt, followed by a prose appendix (*vv.* 16—25) in which its future conversion to the religion of Jehovah is described. The passage may be analysed as follows:—

i. *vv.* 1—15. The judgement on Egypt, conceived as executed by Jehovah in person, who, "riding on a swift cloud," suddenly makes His presence felt in the Nile-valley. In three equal strophes the prophet rapidly sketches the consequences of this visitation on the political, religious, and industrial condition of the country.

(1) *vv.* 1—4. The first effect is the collapse of the Egyptian religion, which is poetically represented by the trembling of the idols at the approach of the God of Israel (1). The foundation of the national self-confidence being thus dissolved there ensues a state of anarchy and civil war, aggravated by an utter absence of sound political guidance, which is vainly sought by the aid of sorcery and magical arts (2, 3). The issue of this state of things is the establishment of a cruel military despotism (4).

(2) *vv.* 5—10. A series of physical and social calamities is next described: the drying-up of the Nile (the source of all the material prosperity of Egypt), the failure of agriculture and the paralysis of the other industries for which the land was famous (fishing and weaving).

(3) *vv.* 11—15. The third strophe depicts the failure of the boasted traditional wisdom of Egypt (11—13), with the result that the infatuated nation reels like a drunkard under its accumulated misfortunes (14, 15).

ii. (1) *vv.* 16, 17. The Egyptians recognise Jehovah as the author of their calamities, and so great is the moral impression produced that the mere mention of the land of Judah fills their hearts with craven terror. It might seem at first sight that these verses are the continuation of the

previous strophe. But the change of style, from poetry to prose, leads us to expect a new departure. And in truth, as Delitzsch has pointed out, the abject fear here spoken of marks the beginning of their conversion to the worship of the true God. Hence the two verses form the natural transition to the description of that spiritual change, which follows in

(2) *vv.* 18—25. These verses contain a succession of concrete predictions indicating the marvellous change which is to take place in the religious attitude of Egypt and its relations to Israel.

(*a*) *v.* 18. Five Egyptian cities (one of which is named) shall speak the "language of Canaan." (The exact significance of this perplexing verse must be reserved for discussion in the notes below.)

(*β*) *vv.* 19—22. The establishment of the worship of Jehovah in the land of Egypt will be symbolised by the erection of an altar in its midst and a pillar on its border: these are also tokens that Jehovah has taken the Egyptians under His protection (19, 20). By manifold experiences of chastisement and deliverance the knowledge of the true God shall be extended and deepened in Egypt, as it had been in Israel in the past (21, 22).

(*γ*) *vv.* 23—25. A third symbol is a "highway" between Egypt and Assyria—a synonym for peaceful intercourse between Israel's powerful neighbours on the East and West (23). Both are admitted to a footing of equality with Israel in the new kingdom of God, and the three states form a "Triple Alliance" which is a channel of blessing to mankind at large (24, 25).

The first section (*vv.* 1—15), exhibits an intimate acquaintance with the internal affairs of the Egyptian Empire. It contains so many resemblances to Isaiah's style and manner of thinking that it seems unreasonable, in the absence of clear indications to the contrary, to assign it to a later writer. But the historical allusions are too vague to enable us to assign a definite date to the prophecy, allowing, indeed, as Dillmann observes, a range of nearly 150 years. The most natural supposition is that Isaiah has in view an Assyrian conquest of Egypt, and that the oracle belongs to a time when delusive expectations of Egyptian support were entertained in Judah. On this assumption, we might find a suitable date for the prediction, (1) about 720, when Sargon defeated the king of Egypt at Raphia, or (2) in 711, when the similar announcement of ch. xx. was issued, or (3) about 702, when the Jewish politicians were eagerly courting an alliance with Egypt. Between these dates it would be impossible to make a final choice. In any case the "hard lord" of *v.* 4 would be the Assyrian conqueror, though it is not necessary to suppose that the prophet had any particular king in view. As a matter of fact the subjugation of Egypt was first effected by Esar-haddon in 670, and this would have to be regarded as the historical fulfilment of the prophecy.—Some critics, however, abandoning the reference to an Assyrian invasion, and (for the most part) the hypothesis of Isaianic authorship, have identified the "hard lord" with an Ethiopian sovereign (Piankhi, or Tirhakah), or with a Persian conqueror (Cambyses,

19 The [1]burden of Egypt.
Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh
unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his
presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of
2 it. And I will [2]stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians:
and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every

[1] Or, *oracle concerning* [2] Or, *join together* Or, *arm*

Xerxes, or even Artaxerxes Ochus), or with a native despot (? Psammetichus I, c. 660).

It is difficult to resist the impression that the prose appendix *vv.* 16—25 belongs to a much later date than the rest of the chapter. It is doubtful, indeed, if the fragments of which it is composed can all be assigned to one period; but there is no part that can with any plausibility be assigned to Isaiah. Objections to his authorship are based partly on the style and language, partly on the sympathetic tone of the references to Egypt (and Assyria), but chiefly on the circumstantial character of the predictions in 18—25. The cogency of the last argument depends partly on the interpretation given to *vv.* 18, 19. If this be a specific reference to Jewish Colonies in Egypt and the Jewish Temple in Leontopolis (erected about 160 B.C.), it must be admitted that such minute descriptions of far distant events are not in accordance with Isaiah's ideal anticipations of the future. Hence the tendency of expositors who maintain the genuineness of the passage is to explain away the literal sense of the expressions, and to regard them as conveying a general prophecy of the diffusion of the true religion in Egypt. But that view is less natural; and the balance of probability is decidedly in favour of the opinion that the appendix is post-exilic.

1—4. The dissolution of the Egyptian nationality by the judicial intervention of Jehovah.

1. On the superscription, see on ch. xiii. 1.

rideth upon a swift cloud] The same representation in Ps. xviii. 10, civ. 3; cf. lxviii. 33; Deut. xxxiii. 26. It is based on the ancient conception of the thunder-storm as the emblem of Jehovah's presence.

the idols] the "non-entities" as in ch. ii. 8, &c.

shall be moved at his presence] **shall quake** (ch. vi. 4, vii. 2) **before him.**

2. Jehovah speaks. The description of anarchy and civil war recalls ch. iii. 5, ix. 18 ff.

I will stir up...Egyptians] Lit. **I will stir up** (see ch. ix. 11) **Egypt against Egypt**—the general expression for civil discord which is explained in the remainder of the verse. *kingdom against kingdom*] LXX. *νομὸς ἐπὶ νομόν*—a correct translation drawn from the translator's local knowledge of Egypt. The numerous *nomes* or cantons were but loosely federated, and dissensions and local jealousies were always apt to break out when the central government was paralysed.

one against his neighbour; city against city, *and* kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall be made void 3
in the midst of it; and I will [1]destroy the counsel thereof:
and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the [2]charmers,
and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.
And I will [3]give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel 4
lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord,
the LORD of hosts. And the waters shall fail from the sea, 5
and the river shall be wasted and become dry. And the 6
rivers shall stink; the [4]streams of [5]Egypt shall be minished

[1] Heb. *swallow up.* [2] Or, *whisperers* [3] Or, *shut up*
[4] Or, *canals* [5] Heb. *Mazor.*

3. *the spirit of Egypt shall be made void*] lit. **be poured out,** cf. Jer. xix. 7. "Spirit" is here used of intellectual power, as "heart" in *v.* 1 denotes courage.

I will destroy] or "swallow up," "annihilate," but see on ch. iii. 12. In their desperation the Egyptians betake themselves to incantations, a sign in Isaiah's view of hopeless religious embarrassment; ch. viii. 19. The word rendered *charmers* (occurring only here) means "mutterers" (of magical spells). For the other expressions employed, see ch. viii. 19.

4. *And I will give over* (lit. "shut up") *the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel* ("hard") *lord* (in Heb. plur. of majesty), *&c.*] The words suggest a foreign ruler and are quite applicable to any Assyrian or other monarch likely to undertake the conquest of Egypt. See Introd. Note above.

the Lord, the LORD of hosts] here, as always, in confirmation of a threat. See on i. 24.

5—10. The material and industrial ruin of Egypt.

5. It has been supposed by some that there is a causal connexion between the judgements here threatened and the political calamities described in the first strophe. The loss of a stable and beneficent central administration in Egypt is immediately felt by the peasantry through the neglect of the vast system of artificial irrigation which is essential to the maintenance of the fertility of the soil. It is manifest, however, that the expressions here point to something far more serious than this, viz. a drying up of the Nile by the direct exercise of Jehovah's power. Cf. Ezek. xxx. 12 and Job xiv. 11 (where the latter part of this verse is reproduced).

the sea] Cf. xviii. 2. "Nili aqua mari similis est" (Pliny). At the time of the annual inundation the Nile has far more the appearance of an inland sea than of a stream; hence it is still called by the Arabs *El-bahr* (the sea).

6. *the rivers...the streams*] As *the river* in *v.* 5 denotes the main

7 and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither away. The
meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all that
is sown by the Nile, shall become dry, be driven away,
8 and be no more. The fishers also shall lament, and all
they that cast angle into the Nile shall mourn, and they that
9 spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Moreover they
that work in combed flax, and they that weave [1]white cloth,
10 shall be ashamed. And her [2]pillars shall be broken in
pieces, all they [3]that work for hire *shall be* grieved in soul.

[1] Or, *cotton* [2] Or, *foundations* [3] Or, *that make dams*

stream of the Nile, we may explain the "rivers" here of canals by which its waters were distributed for the purpose of irrigation; and the "streams" (lit. "Niles") of the branches into which the Nile itself is divided.

The word for *stink* is an anomalous form in Hebr. That for *Egypt* is a rare name (*Māṣôr*, cf. Assyr. *Muṣur*, Arab. *Miṣr*), found also in ch. xxxvii. 25; 2 Kings xix. 24; Mic. vii. 12.

7. *The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile*] The text here is unintelligible. The word for "meadows," which does not occur again, is supposed to mean literally "bare place," hardly a suitable designation! A stricter translation would be, "Bare places are on the Nile, on the (very) brink of the Nile." The LXX. has an entirely different text ("and all the green Nile-grass [Hebr. אָחוּ] round about the river"), which probably preserves some genuine element; but a satisfactory restoration is impossible.

all that is sown] A unique term. Perhaps "seed-field," but note the verb "driven away" which follows. "Seed-field of the Nile" might mean the alluvial deposit produced by the inundation, which is the source of Egypt's fertility.

8. Fishing, one of the staple industries of Egypt, is first mentioned, as that most immediately affected (cf. Ex. vii. 21). The two methods referred to, angling and net-fishing, are both depicted on the monuments.

9. Textile manufactures, linen and cotton, flourished greatly in ancient Egypt.

they that work in combed flax] So the Massoretic text. But a much better sense is obtained by dividing the verse otherwise (with Pesh. and Vulg.), and then changing the word for *white cloth* into a verb (cf. xxix. 22), thus: **And the flax-workers shall be ashamed; the combers** (fem.) **and weavers** (masc.) **turn pale.**

10. As rendered by R.V. the verse is a generalising conclusion to the section, *vv.* 5—10. The expressions, however, are very obscure, and the sense is doubtful. The word for *pillars* is found in Ps. xi. 3 ("foundations"), but it is disputed whether the capitalists or the labourers are here regarded as the foundations of society. In the second

The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the counsel of the 11
wisest counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say
ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of
ancient kings? Where then are thy wise men? and let them 12
tell thee now; and let them know what the LORD of hosts
hath purposed concerning Egypt. The princes of Zoan 13
are become fools, the princes of [1]Noph are deceived; they
have caused Egypt to go astray, that are the corner stone
of her tribes. The LORD hath mingled a spirit of perverse- 14
ness in the midst of her: and they have caused Egypt to go

[1] Or, *Memphis*

clause A.V. follows Jewish authority in keeping up the reference to fishing (cf. R.V. marg. "that make dams") but its "sluices and ponds for fish" is altogether wrong. LXX. errs in the opposite direction by dragging in the liquor trade ("manufacturers of strong drink" [*shēkār*] instead of "workers for hire" [*seker*]).

11—15. The stultification of Pharaoh's advisers.

11. *The princes ...foolish*] **Mere fools are the princes of Zoan.** Zoan (Tanis, between the two most easterly mouths of the Nile), an ancient city (Num. xiii. 22), had played an important part in Egyptian history. Formerly the seat of the Hyksos kings, it had subsequently given its name to two native dynasties (21st and 23rd). Partly because of its proximity to Canaan it is sometimes mentioned in the O.T. as representing Egypt. The next clause runs literally: **the wisest counsellors of Pharaoh—stupid counsel** (sc. is theirs)!

how say ye unto Pharaoh...] The wisdom of Egypt was the hereditary possession of the priestly caste to which the early dynasties belonged. The counsellors are here introduced boasting of their descent from these kings and sages of the olden time. How can they dare, witless as they are, to make such a boast? Read (in both cases) **a** *son.*

12. The Pharaoh is now addressed in turn. **Where are they, pray, thy wise men?** In face of this problem they are nowhere; they cannot "know," far less "tell," the purpose of Jehovah towards Egypt.

13. *are become fools*] Better **are befooled**—"stultified." *Noph* is Memphis, the capital of Lower Egypt, and an ancient seat of Egyptian religion and learning. An older form of the Hebrew name is apparently *Moph* (Hos. ix. 6); both forms are perhaps contracted from *Mnoph* (hieroglyphic *Mennofer*). The city was situated in the southern corner of the Delta, near Cairo, which was largely built from its ruins.

the corner stone of her tribes] i.e. her ruling caste. For the metaphor, cf. Jud. xx. 2; 1 Sam. xiv. 38; Zech. x. 4. The "tribes" may be either the castes or the nomes (cantons).

14. Their intellectual confusion is caused by "a spirit" from Jehovah (but not personified as in 1 Kings xxii. 21 f.). *a spirit of perverse-*

astray in every work thereof, as a drunken man [1]staggereth
15 in his vomit. Neither shall there be for Egypt any work,
which head or tail, palm-branch or rush, may do.
16 In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall
tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of
17 the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the
land of Judah shall become a terror unto Egypt, [2]every
one to whom mention is made thereof shall be afraid,
because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts, which he
purposeth against it.
18 In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt

[1] Or, *goeth astray*
[2] Or, *every one that maketh mention thereof, to him shall they turn in fear*

ness] cf. "spirit of deep slumber," ch. xxix. 10; "spirit of whoredom," Hos. v. 4; "spirit of falsehood," 1 Ki. xxii. 23.

go astray...staggereth] The same verb should be used in both places —"wander" or "stray." The strong figure has a parallel in ch. xxviii. 7. Cf. Job xii. 25.

15. No concerted action is possible, and every proposal that is brought forward falls to the ground.

head or tail, palm-branch or rush] exactly as in ch. ix. 14.

16, 17. The terror of Jehovah on the Egyptians. There is an allusion to the effect of the plagues in the time of the Exodus. See Ex. x. 7, xi. 3, xii. 33, 36. Then, as in this prophecy, the people of God became an object of fear to their enemies, through the strokes of Jehovah's hand.

16. *like unto women*] timid and faint-hearted (Nah. iii. 13).

the shaking (or "swinging") *of the hand...which he shaketh*] i.e. the repeated blows with which He smites them, cf. xxx. 32, x. 32, xi. 15.

17. By association of ideas the fear of Jehovah becomes fear of the land which is His dwelling-place. The verse is intelligible only in this connexion.

every one...afraid] Either "every (Egyptian) to whom one mentions it, shall fear," or "whenever any one mentions it to him (Egypt) he shall fear."

the purpose of the LORD of hosts] see *v.* 11.

18. The verse may mean either (1) that an indefinite, but small, number of Egyptian cities shall be converted to the worship of Jehovah and adopt Hebrew as at least their sacred language; or (2) that at a certain epoch there shall be five (and no more) Jewish colonies in Egypt maintaining their national language and religion. On the former view "five" is a round number (as in ch. xxx. 17; Gen. xliii. 34; Lev. xxvi. 8; 1 Sam. xvii. 40, xxi. 3; 2 Ki. vii. 13), and the verse is a prophecy

that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called The city of [1]destruction.

[1] Or, *Heres* Or, according to another reading, *the sun*

of the first beginnings of the conversion of Egypt—a "day of small things." This interpretation, although grammatically defensible, is not natural. There was no reason why a numeral should be used at all; and since, according to Herodotus (II. 177), there were 20,000 inhabited cities in Egypt, the mention of "five" as a round number would unduly emphasise the *slightness* of the diffusion of Jehovah-worship in that country. If we adopt the second view the prophecy must have been written at a time when the prospect of Hebrew-speaking Jewish communes in Egypt was a natural expression of the anticipation that the influence of the Jewish religion would extend to that country. This was not the case at the very late date maintained by some critics (B.C. 160). By that time the Egyptian Jews had so completely abandoned their native tongue that a Greek translation of the Scriptures had become necessary for their use. This part of the prophecy is more intelligible at a considerably earlier period, before the universal solvent of the Greek language had begun to leaven the varied nationalities of the old world. It is of course impossible to identify the "five cities." Hitzig has attempted it by the help of Jer. xliv. 1, adding to the three towns there mentioned, Heliopolis and Leontopolis (see below).

one shall be called The city of destruction] The exegesis of this clause is complicated by a diversity of text. (α) The received text has *'îr haheres*, which in Hebrew can only mean "the city of Destruction." The insurmountable objection to this reading is that it is inconsistent with the favourable general sense of the verse; for the translation "city of [the] destruction of idolatry, &c." is quite unwarranted. Some, however, explain the word by *haris*, an Arabic epithet of the lion, rendering, "city of the Lion," i.e. Leontopolis, where the Jewish Temple was built. This might be intelligible as a *correction* of the reading to be next mentioned; hardly as an independent text. Moreover, the Greek translator of Isaiah knew nothing of it, but followed an entirely different reading (γ below). (β) Another reading, found in some Hebrew MSS. and followed by the Vulg., is *'îr haheres*, "city of the Sun," i.e. Heliopolis. This gives a good sense. Heliopolis, the biblical *On* (Gen. xli. 50, &c.), might be especially mentioned because of its great importance in the religion of Egypt, as it is (under the name "house of the Sun") in Jer. xliii. 13. The objection to accepting this as the original text is that there is only one well-attested occurrence of *heres* = "sun" in the O.T. (Job ix. 7); and it is difficult to account for the use of this very uncommon word instead of the usual *shemesh*. But if *Har-heres* (= *'îr heres?*) in Jud. i. 35 be another name for the frequently mentioned *Beth-shemesh* (house of the sun), we have at least a suggestive parallel to this cryptic designation of the Egyptian City of the Sun. (γ) The LXX. reads

19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border

"city of Righteousness" (*'îr hazzedeḳ*). This reading, in itself the least probable of the three, is defended by some commentators as most in accordance with Isaiah's use of names as descriptive of the essential quality of the objects (cf. i. 26, iv. 3, vii. 14, ix. 6). So here "city of righteousness" is regarded not as the proper name of any one city, but an epithet applicable to any of the five.—On the whole, the suggestion of Cheyne seems as plausible as any, that the original form was *heres*, and the reference was to Heliopolis; that this was altered by the Egyptian Jews to *zedeḳ* and by those of Palestine to *heres* (destruction), the motive in both cases being to establish a reference (in the first case favourable, in the second unfavourable) to the temple at Leontopolis. The latter variant, however, might be due to accident.

[The Jewish Temple in Egypt was erected about 160 with the sanction of Ptolemy Philometor and his consort by Onias IV., the legitimate heir of the high-priesthood at Jerusalem. (Josephus, *Ant.* XIII. 3, 1 f.; *Bell. Jud.* VII. 10, 2 f.) It was a brilliant conception on the part of the priest, but was probably not dictated by very lofty motives. Having been ousted from his rights by the intrigues of the apostate party in Judea, he sought by this means to retain the state and emoluments of a great ecclesiastical dignitary. His enterprise cannot have been regarded with friendly eyes by the patriotic party in Jerusalem; and afterwards, when the new Temple began to divert the stream of Jewish liberality from Jerusalem, their antipathy increased. The temple was built, after the model of that at Jerusalem, on the ruins of an Egyptian temple of the lion-headed goddess Bast (hence the name Leontopolis) in the Heliopolitan nome.]

19. It was to this verse, according to Josephus (and not to *v.* 18), that Onias appealed in support of the legitimacy of his project. The statement is perfectly intelligible; it had never occurred to any one to think of Leontopolis in connexion with *v.* 18; on the other hand, the promise of *v.* 19 was warrant enough.

an altar to the LORD] evidently intended for sacrificial offerings, not a mere memorial (see *v.* 21). The writer thus transcends the limits of the Deuteronomic legislation, which recognised but one altar of Jehovah. Some explain the prediction in a symbolical sense, of the spiritual worship of Jehovah maintained by the Jews and their proselytes. But this is hardly justifiable.

a pillar at the border thereof] The word *mazzēbāh* usually denotes the sacred stones which stood by the idolatrous shrines of Canaan and whose destruction is enjoined in the Law (Deut. xvi. 22; Ex. xxiii. 24, &c.). From its use here it has been inferred that the prophecy dates from a time anterior to the promulgation of the Deuteronomic Code in the reign of Josiah. But it is doubtful if even in the age of Isaiah the *mazzēbāh* in this sense could have had positive value as an adjunct of Jehovah's worship. The word is probably used in the general sense of

thereof to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and for 20
a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt:
for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors,
and he shall send them a saviour, and [1]a defender, and
he shall deliver them. And the LORD shall [2]be known to 21
Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day;
yea, they shall worship with sacrifice and oblation, and shall
vow a vow unto the LORD, and shall perform it. And the 22
LORD shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing; and they
shall return unto the LORD, and he shall be intreated of
them, and shall heal them.

[1] Or, *a mighty one* [2] Or, *make himself known*

a memorial pillar, and may have been suggested by the huge monoliths which were so characteristic of Egyptian religion. This one stands on the frontier of Egypt, as a sign to every one entering the country that Jehovah is known there.

20. *for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts*] i.e. a reminder that He has a people in Egypt, and that by their presence the land is concentrated to Him.

The process of conversion in this and the following verses is finely conceived. First, the name of Jehovah is made known by the religious observances of the Jewish colonists and proselytes; then, in a time of trouble, the Egyptians turn to Him instead of to their false gods, and learn to know Him through His answer to their prayers (20, 21); finally this experience of Jehovah is deepened and purified by a discipline similar to that to which Israel was subjected in the time of the Judges (22).

for they shall cry, &c.] Render **when they cry to Jehovah because of oppressors, that he may send them a deliverer, then** &c. (see below).

the oppressors] Omit the art.; the reference is quite general.

a saviour] See Jud. iii. 9, 15; 2 Kings xiii. 5.

a defender] Better: **a champion**. A special allusion to Ptolemy *Soter*, or to the Jewish generals who served under Ptolemy Philometor, is not called for. Some translate the word as a verb introducing the apodosis: **then he will contend** (cf. Ps. lxxiv. 22), **and deliver them.**

21. *shall be known*] Rather: **shall make himself known**, as marg.

sacrifice and oblation] animal and vegetable offerings, see on i. 11, 13.

22. *smiting and healing*] i.e. He will smite only in order to heal (Hos. vi. 1). *be intreated*] lit. "let himself be intreated" = hear their supplications (*Niph. tolerativum*).

23—25. The incorporation of Egypt and Assyria in the kingdom of God. On the hypothesis that the prophecy is post-exilic "Assyria" will here denote the power to whom the reversion of the ancient Assyrian Empire had fallen. See on ch. xi. 11.

23 In that day shall there be a high way out of Egypt to
Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the
Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall worship
with the Assyrians.
24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and
25 with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth: for that
the LORD of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be
Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and
Israel mine inheritance.

23. *a high way*] leading of course through Palestine. The ancient enmity between the two empires is laid aside in consequence of their common acceptance of the religion of Jehovah.

the Egyptians shall worship, &c.] The words would more naturally mean "Egypt shall serve Assyria." It might be hazardous to affirm that this is not the true meaning, although the context does appear to exclude a subordination of one empire to the other

24. *shall Israel be the third*]—member of the Messianic League.

25. *for that the LORD of hosts hath blessed them*] A better sense is given by the LXX. "[the earth] which Jehovah of hosts hath blessed." The masculine suffix must be changed to fem.

my people and *the work of my hands* are titles elsewhere confined to Israel, but here accorded to Egypt and Assyria, the still dearer epithet *mine inheritance* being reserved for Israel,—as it were the ancestral estate of the one true God.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAP. XIX. 16—22.

The recent discoveries (1904–1907) of Aramaic papyri from the site of the ancient Elephantine (on an island near the first cataract of the Nile) may have an important bearing on the interpretation of these verses. They prove that at least as early as the middle of the sixth century B.C. a Jewish military colony was settled there on the southern frontier of Egypt, that it had built a temple to Yahwe (Yahu), and had maintained its distinctive religion under its own priesthood for more than a hundred years. The most important documents relate to a destruction of this temple in 411 by the local Egyptian authorities, and to the subsequent appeal of the Jewish priests at Elephantine to the Persian governor of Judea for permission to restore it. We learn that the request was granted, but (it would seem) with a significant reservation. Whereas formerly the ritual had included meal-offerings, incense *and burnt-offerings*—and the supplicants naturally assume that this usage will be continued—the reply of the Persian governor sanctions only meal-offerings and incense as sacrifices in the restored temple: that is to say (unless the omission be accidental) animal sacrifices were no longer to be offered on the altar at Elephantine. For our immediate

purpose, however, the main fact is that the temple is stated to have been built in the days of the native Egyptian kings before the Persian conquest in 525. This carries back the origin of the Jewish settlement at Elephantine to the period of the 26th dynasty, which ruled over Egypt from the expulsion of the Assyrians (*c.* 660) till the advent of the Persians. The nucleus of the military colony on the frontier may have been formed by part of that Jewish contingent which, according to a credible tradition preserved in the spurious letter of Aristeas, was employed by Psammetichus II (593–588) in his expedition against the Ethiopians, and was afterwards stationed as garrisons in Egypt (cf. Herod. II. 30). But there are grounds for thinking that the service of Jews as mercenary soldiers in the Egyptian army dates from the reign of Psammetichus I (664–609). It has long been surmised that Deut. xvii. 16 (cf. xxviii. 68) refers to a practice of the later Judean kings of selling their subjects as foot-soldiers to Egypt in exchange for horses. Since we know that Psammetichus I established his rule over the petty princes of the Nile valley largely by the use of foreign troops, we can readily believe that amongst these were Jewish regiments obtained by treaty with his contemporary Manasseh (*c.* 692–638). There is therefore nothing improbable in the assumption that Jewish colonies like that of Elephantine may have been found in Egypt from the middle of the seventh century onwards. What is proved to have happened at Elephantine may have happened even earlier at other places; and when Josephus tells us that in B.C. 160 Onias found many Jewish temples in Egypt we may safely credit the statement, and conclude that these temples were of equal antiquity with the one whose existence has so recently been disclosed.

There are several points at which these historical data touch on the explanation of the passage before us. (1) In the first place they shew that the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt was of older standing and more numerous than might otherwise have been supposed. The period in which there might have been five Hebrew-speaking communes in Egypt now stretches back to the middle of the seventh century; and the presumption that the prophecy is of post-Exilic origin is correspondingly weakened. Although there is no positive evidence of the fact, it is quite conceivable that colonies of Jews, military or civil, were founded by Psammetichus I, even if the one at Elephantine was of somewhat later date. (2) It is felt by many critics that the allusions to the "altar" and the *mazzebah* in *v.* 19 are inconsistent with a date later than the introduction of the Deuteronomic law in B.C. 621 (see esp. Deut. xii., and xvi. 22). A similar question no doubt arises with regard to the existence of a temple of Jehovah in Egypt at all; but the two cases are not quite parallel. It is easier to imagine that the Deuteronomic legislation was ignored by a body of Jewish soldiers drawn mostly from the common people and carrying on the traditions of the popular religion, than that such laxity was viewed with approval by a prophet living in Palestine. But however that may be, the evidence before us indicates at least a possibility that both the erection

of an altar in Egypt and the writing of this prophecy actually belong to the pre-Deuteronomic period. (3) Another difficulty presents itself with regard to the attitude of the Jerusalem priesthood towards a rival sanctuary. We learn from the papyri that the heads of the colony at Elephantine had petitioned the authorities at Jerusalem for permission to rebuild their temple, but had received no answer; and we have seen already that when the desired permission was accorded by the Persian governor it was accompanied by the condition that for the future only bloodless sacrifices were to be offered there. Does this mean that the ecclesiastics of Judea refused to recognise the legitimacy of the Egyptian sanctuary: and that the restriction imposed by the Persian governor was of the nature of a compromise intended to safeguard the scruples of strict Judaism? But *v.* 21 seems to contemplate the offering of animal sacrifices in Egypt—unless, indeed, the Egyptians are there conceived as bringing their offerings to Jerusalem. Must we then conclude that the prophecy was written, if not before 621, at all events before Ezra's Reformation in 444? It is impossible to answer these questions with certainty. But it may be said that none of the considerations mentioned above are decisive against post-Exilic authorship. We know too little of the state of religious feeling after the Exile, or of the extent to which it was dominated by sacerdotal ideas, to justify the opinion that a broad outlook on the future of the true religion might not have expressed itself in language inconsistent with a literal understanding of the Law. The example of Onias in B.C. 160 proves that it was not impossible for a Jew to harmonise allegiance to the Law with worship at an Egyptian sanctuary. (4) It is very doubtful if any light is thrown on the political background of the passage by the military character of the early Jewish colonisation of Egypt. This idea has been cleverly worked out by Steuernagel (*Studien und Kritiken*, 1909, p. 8 ff.), who treats the whole chapter (with the exception of *vv.* 5–10, 23—25) as a unity, and assigns it to the time of Psammetichus I. Jehovah riding on a swift cloud symbolises the arrival of the Jewish mercenaries in Egypt; the "hard lord" is Psammetichus, whose rule was established by their aid; the terror inspired by their exploits is referred to in *v.* 17; the five cities are of course military colonies supposed to have been founded by Psammetichus; the altar and *mazzebah* may be those of Elephantine (which, however, could hardly be said to be "in the midst" of Egypt!). In *vv.* 20 ff. Steuernagel sees allusions to the campaign against Ethiopia (which he erroneously attributes to the first Psammetichus instead of the second): the "oppressors" from whom deliverance is sought are the Ethiopians; the "deliverer" represents the Jewish auxiliaries, whose help is again invoked in this crisis; and the Egyptians thus come to know Jehovah as their friend and saviour. It seems to us that this ingenious theory exaggerates beyond all natural probability the prowess of the Judean soldiery, and their influence on the destinies of Egypt; it minimises unduly the eschatological element in the prophecy; and besides it overlooks the marked difference in style between *vv.* 1—15

In the year that [1]Tartan came unto Ashdod, when 20

[1] The title of the Assyrian commander in chief.

and *vv.* 16 ff. Without denying that the circumstances of the 26th dynasty, if they were more fully known, might afford a suitable setting for the prophecy, we may still hold that a later date is equally probable for *vv.* 16—25.

Ch. XX. An Assyrian Conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia predicted.

The chapter is unique amongst the records of Isaiah's work as giving the interpretation of a very remarkable symbolic action performed by the prophet at the command of Jehovah. For three years he went about in the garb of a beggar or captive, an object of astonishment and derision to the respectable inhabitants of Jerusalem. At the end of that time he published this explanation of his strange conduct. It was a public protest against the false hopes then entertained of a speedy deliverance from the Assyrian tyranny through the help of Egypt and Ethiopia (*v.* 6).

The date of the prophecy is assured. The expedition mentioned in *v.* 1 took place in 711, and is minutely related in two of Sargon's own inscriptions (see Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, Vol. II., pp. 89 ff. [Engl. Trans.]; Gressmann, *Altor. Texte u. Bilder*, I. 117 ff.). At that time Ashdod was the focus of disaffection in Palestine towards the Assyrian government. Its king, Azuri, had withheld his tribute and joined with the princes of the neighbouring states (Judah included) in an appeal to Egypt for succour. For this he was deposed by Sargon, his brother Akhimit being set up in his place; but Akhimit was in turn removed by the Ashdodites, who chose one Yaman or Yamani as their leader. Sargon despatched, from beyond the Tigris, an expeditionary force composed of his best troops, which advanced by forced marches to Ashdod; the city was taken and plundered and its inhabitants led into captivity; and the Philistine territory was incorporated in the Assyrian Empire. Yaman had fled to the king of Meluḫḫa (Ethiopia), by whom he was delivered up to the Assyrian king. Sargon's forces seem to have been too much occupied elsewhere to allow the work of chastisement to be carried further, and so for the time Judah escaped the penalty of its meditated revolt.

The chapter is important as shewing that at this date Isaiah still looked forward to a great extension of the Assyrian conquests, an expectation which he afterwards abandoned, but which was fulfilled after his death (670).

1, 2. A narrative introduction.

1. *Tartan*] In Assyrian *Turtanu*, the official title of the "chief of the staff." Cf. 2 Kings xviii. 17. Sargon speaks as if he had led the expedition in person: *qui facit per alium facit per se.*

Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against
2 Ashdod and took it; at that time the LORD spake by
Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sack-
cloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot.
3 And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the LORD
said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and
barefoot [1]three years for a sign and a wonder upon Egypt
4 and upon [2]Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away

[1] Or, *to be for three years a sign &c.* [2] Heb. *Cush.*

Sargon] (Assyr. Sarrukin) the only mention of this now familiar name in the O.T. Before its discovery on the monuments in 1847, it had been supposed to be a second name of either Shalmaneser or Sennacherib (see Tobit i. 15); but the conjecture of several early critics (Eichhorn, Gesenius, Ewald, &c.) that he would prove to be an intermediate king has been amply verified by Assyriology; and Sargon is now one of the best known, as he was one of the most vigorous, of Assyrian monarchs. He reigned from 722—705.

2. This verse is an explanatory parenthesis. It could be dispensed with grammatically, and indeed historically also; for it conveys no information whatever as to the circumstances which led the prophet to adopt this extraordinary method of teaching (see Introd., p. xxxvi); hence it is probably a late insertion. The command here mentioned must have been given three years before the oracle of *vv.* 3 ff.; hence the expression *at that time* must be understood in a loose sense and for *spake* we must render "had spoken."

sackcloth] the rough garment of hair or coarse linen worn by mourners in lieu of the customary upper garment; also by prophets (2 Ki. i. 8; Zech. xiii. 4). It would be surprising if Isaiah wore this distinctive badge of his profession. He is directed to "ungird" (and lay aside) this and walk "naked," i.e. in his under-garment (the *kuttōneth*), cf. 1 Sam. xix. 24; John xxi. 7. The action was expressive of the deepest degradation, and involved no small sacrifice for a man of Isaiah's position. But that he actually performed it cannot reasonably be questioned. Cf. Mic. i. 8.

3, resuming *v.* 1, gives the interpretation of the symbol.

my servant Isaiah] Isaiah is Jehovah's "servant" as a prophet. Cf. Am. iii. 7; Num. xii. 7.

a sign and a wonder] see ch. viii. 18. By the Heb. accents the words "three years" are attached to this clause in order to convey the sense "a three-years' sign," meaning "a sign of an event which is to happen after three years." But this is very unnatural, and was evidently suggested by a desire to avoid the notion that the action was kept up for so long a time.

upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia] Ethiopia was at this time the paramount influence in the Nile-valley; see Introd. p. xiv. The expedition

the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. And they shall be dismayed and 5 ashamed, because of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. And the inhabitant of this coastland 6 shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and we, how shall we escape?

of Shabaka, which brought the whole of Egypt under the rule of the Ethiopian kings, is dated by Breasted about 712 B.C., shortly before Isaiah was able to explain his symbolic action. "Upon" may be either **against** or **concerning**.

4. The apodosis. *lead away*] as in 1 Sam. xxx. 2.

the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia] The words for captives and exiles are both abstracts used in a concrete sense; the corresponding verbs denote, the one the act of making captive, the other the act of going into exile (lit. leaving the land bare).

to the shame] The word means "nakedness," and the construction is difficult. Probably a gloss.

5. 6. The effect which the sight of these miserable gangs of captives will produce on the inhabitants of Palestine. This is the real motive of the prophecy. Hezekiah probably took the warning.

they shall be dismayed] The subject has to be supplied from the next verse.

6. *this coastland*] The expression is most accurately descriptive of the Philistine country, but must include Judah. Isaiah did not go three years naked and barefoot for the sake of the Philistines. It no doubt embraces the territory of all the states concerned in the conspiracy—"this region."

expectation here and *v.* 5 is "object of expectation" (*mabbāṭ*, "that to which one looks," from *hibbīṭ*). *we* has a position of great emphasis in the original.

Ch. XXI. Oracles on Babylon, Edom, and Arabia.

These three short and difficult oracles form together one of the most singular passages in prophecy. Common to all three are (*a*) the obscure oracular utterance, in striking contrast to the terse lucidity of Isaiah's style, (*b*) the strongly-marked visionary element in the writer's experience, and (*c*) a certain readiness of sympathy with the foreign nations concerned in the predictions. These features indicate, if not identity of authorship, at least a peculiar type of prophetic inspiration, to which no complete parallel is found in the acknowledged writings of Isaiah. It is true that expressions characteristic of Isaiah occur in *vv.* 1—10, but they are hardly sufficient to remove the impression that

the individuality of the writer is distinct from that of Isaiah. In the rest of the chapter the linguistic evidence is decidedly adverse to Isaiah's authorship.

The oracle on Babel. *vv.* 1—10.

Like whirlwinds in the desert, the prophet has seen in a "hard vision" the stormy and impetuous advance of the Median and Elamite hosts against Babylon, *vv.* 1, 2.

Unnerved and appalled by what he has seen, his mind is filled with gloom and foreboding; the immediate prospect of carnage and destruction obscures the brighter hopes beyond, of deliverance for Israel, *vv.* 3, 4.

Another vision is briefly depicted: a Babylonian carousal within the walls, suddenly interrupted by the call to arms, *v.* 5.

The prophet then describes the mysterious inward process by which the truth had been communicated to him. In spirit he had stationed "the watchman" (his prophetic consciousness) to scan the horizon for some indication of the coming catastrophe. After long waiting "the watchman" descries the appointed sign—a train of riders—and forthwith proclaims its purport, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," &c., *vv.* 6—9.

The oracle closes with an apostrophe to the writer's own people announcing that what he has seen is the sure word of Jehovah, *v.* 10.

The question of authorship has to be settled mainly on historical grounds, and we have to consider in the first place, what conquest of Babylon is here referred to? (1) According to an attractive theory propounded by George Smith (the Assyriologist) and elaborated by Kleinert, the reference is to one of the sieges of Babylon which took place in Isaiah's lifetime, most probably that by Sargon in 710. The king of Babylon at that time was Merodach-baladan (see Introd., p. xvii f., and below on ch. xxxix.), whose friendly intercourse with Hezekiah is thought to account for Isaiah's interest in the struggle, as well as for the aversion with which he seems to contemplate the triumph of Assyria (*vv.* 3—5). (2) The majority of critics hold that the prophecy belongs to the last decade of the exile and relates to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 (see on ch. xiii. f.). This is certainly the more obvious theory, and the exegetical difficulties which have been urged against it are all capable of a satisfactory solution. The "tone of depression" manifested in *vv.* 3, 4 belongs to the subjectivity of the writer, and merely proves that he is distinct from the authors of ch. xiii. f., xl. ff.; it has no parallel in Isaiah's descriptions of the fate of Judah's allies. The mention of "Elam" and "Media" (*v.* 2) as the conquering foe is not incompatible with Isaiah's authorship (see xxii. 6), but is most naturally explained of the army of Cyrus. The impression that the author lived at a distance from Babylon is possibly correct (see on *v.* 1); but there may have been inspired seers in Palestine during the time of the Exile. On the other hand, *v.* 10 and the latter part of

The [1]burden of the wilderness of the sea. 21
As whirlwinds in the South sweep through, it cometh
from the wilderness, from a terrible land. A [2]grievous 2
vision is declared unto me: the treacherous dealer dealeth

[1] Or, *oracle concerning* [2] Or, *hard*

vv. 2 seem clearly to imply that Babylon herself, and not her conqueror, is the cruel tyrant under whom the Jews and other nations are languishing.

1, 2. The "hard vision" of Babylon's fate.

1. *The burden of the wilderness of the sea*] Perhaps, **The oracle** (see on xiii. 1). "**Desert of the Sea.**" The first of a series of enigmatic headings, all but peculiar to this section of the book: xxi. 11, 13, xxii. 1 (cf. xxx. 6). In the majority of cases they are to be explained as catchwords, taken from the body of the oracle (in this instance the fourth word of the original, "desert"). Similarly David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is entitled the song of "the bow," 2 Sam. i. 18, cf. *v.* 22. The words "of the sea" are wanting in the LXX., and are best omitted. Some render "deserts" (reading *midbarim* for *midbar-yam*). Others, again, but very improbably, regard the fuller form as an emblematic designation of Babylon or Babylonia: the country that was once a sea (θαλασσα Herod i. 184) and will be so again.

The well-marked rhythm requires a word to be supplied at the beginning, and the verse may be rendered (with Gray):

[A roaring] as of storms
As they sweep through the Negeb!
It cometh from the wilderness,
From the terrible land.

in the South] Lit. "in the Negeb," the dry pastoral region in the south of Judah and beyond. The inference that the prophecy was written in Palestine is plausible, but not inevitable, since the word is used of the southern direction.

it (the undefined report) *cometh from the wilderness*] probably the Syrian desert. *a terrible land*] cf. xxx. 6; Deut. i. 19, viii. 15, &c.

2. *A grievous* (lit. "hard") *vision is declared unto me*]—by the "watchman," *v.* 6. "Hard" may mean either "calamitous" (1 Ki. xiv. 6) or "difficult," "hard of interpretation" (John vi. 60).

the treacherous dealer...spoileth] Cf. ch. xxiv. 16. It is difficult to decide whether this applies to the besieging foe or to the conduct of the Babylonians towards their captives. The former view might be defended by xxxiii. 1 (assuming that the Assyrians are there alluded to); the other alternative might be supported by the last clause of this verse (see below). The difficulty is best met by changing the active into passive participles (see again xxxiii. 1): "the betrayer is betrayed; the spoiler spoiled" (so Haller).

treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam;
besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof [1]have I made to
3 cease. Therefore are my loins filled with anguish; pangs
have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman in
travail: I am [2]pained so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed
4 so that I cannot see. My heart [3]panteth, horror hath
affrighted me: the twilight that I desired hath been turned
5 into trembling unto me. They prepare the table, they
[4]set the watch, they eat, they drink: rise up, ye princes,
6 anoint the shield. For thus hath the Lord said unto me,

[1] Or, *will I make*
[2] Heb. *bent.*
[3] Heb. *wandereth.*
[4] Or, *spread the carpets*

Elam...Media] The dominions of Cyrus. The former lay east of the Tigris and north of the Persian Gulf; Media was the mountainous district adjoining it on the north. Cyrus, according to the Babylonian records, was originally king of Anzan, in the north of Elam; in 549 he conquered Media, uniting the two in one kingdom. The name "Persia" never occurs in pre-exilic books.

all the sighing thereof] i.e. (if the noun be right) the misery produced by her (Babylon's) ruthless oppressions. The verb shews that Jehovah is the speaker.

3, 4. The agitation and terror of the prophet.

3. *are my loins filled with* **writhing**] Nah. ii. 10.

I am pained...hear, &c.] Rather (nearly as A.V.) **I am bent at the hearing; I am dismayed at the seeing.** Similar metaphorical descriptions of mental anguish are frequent.

4. *My heart panteth*] lit. **strayeth**; as we should say "my reason reels." "Heart," as often, is used of the intellect.

the twilight...desired] The cool and pleasant evening hour, longed for as a relief from the heat of the day, has been *turned into trembling* for the seer, by this frightful vision.

5. In contrast with his own lonely vigils, the prophet has a second vision of the careless security of the Babylonian revellers (cf. Dan. v.; Jer. li. 39; Is. xiv. 11).

they set the watch] Rather: **they spread the mat.** The verb used is identical in form with the common verb for "watch" (צָפָה), but the root is different. The causative formation is frequent in the sense of "overlay" (with metal, &c.); hence it is conjectured that the simple form (found only here) meant something like "lay," and the derived noun something "laid."

rise up, ye princes] The banquet breaks up in confusion, for the foe is at the gates.

anoint the shield] Shields were oiled (2 Sam. i. 21), probably to make the blows glide off them.

Go, set a watchman; let him declare what he seeth: [1]and 7
when he seeth [2]a troop, [3]horsemen in pairs, [2]a troop of
asses, [2]a troop of camels, he shall hearken diligently with
much heed. And he cried as a lion: O Lord, I stand 8
continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and am
set in my ward [4]whole nights: and, behold, here [5]cometh 9
a troop of men, [3]horsemen in pairs. And he answered and
said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images

[1] Or, *and he saw...and he hearkened*
[2] Or, *a chariot* Or, *chariots*
[3] Or, *a pair of horsemen*
[4] Or, *every night*
[5] Or, *come chariots of men*

6 9. Hitherto the prophet has spoken of his vision as a thing "announced" to him; now he proceeds to describe, in a very interesting passage, the method of its communication. The delineation is dramatic, but rests on a real consciousness of dual personality in the writer. The "watchman" is the prophet himself in the ecstatic condition—his *alter ego*: he then sees and hears things beyond human ken. Meanwhile his ordinary waking consciousness is suspended, but at the same time is on the alert to receive and transmit to the world the "watchman's" report. The same idea is somewhat differently applied in Hab. ii. 1; Zech. i. 9; Ezek. viii. 1—3, xi. 24 f. For the expression, cf. Jer. vi. 17; Ez. iii. 17, xxxiii. 7.

6. *Go, set* **the** *watchman*, &c.] A direction from Jehovah to the prophet's ordinary self.

7. The verse reads: **And if he sees a riding train, a pair of horsemen** (2 Ki. ix. 25), **a train of asses, a train of camels, then let him hearken,—hearken with great heed.** The expected sign that great events are on foot is conveyed, by a sort of pre-hypnotic suggestion, by the prophet's conscious to his subconscious self; when the riders are seen the watchman is to listen intently for the message that will surely follow. The word for "train" means always "chariot" (usually collective); here it must be used in the sense of "riding train" like the Arab. *rakb*. The procession may represent the Persian army. "Asses" and "camels" are probably introduced as beasts of burden, although both animals are reported to have been used by the Persians in actual battle.

8. *as a lion*] gives no sense, and the text must be corrupt. As a pure conjecture we might read "And the watchman cried."

in my ward] i.e. "at my post."

For *whole nights* read "all the nights."

9. Hardly has he spoken when the appointed vision appears; **And, behold, there cometh a train of men, a pair of horsemen** (see *v.* 7). And in the same breath the watchman declares its significance: **Fallen, fallen is Babylon**, &c. Cf. Rev. xviii. 1 f.

10 of her gods are broken unto the ground. O thou my threshing, and the [1]corn of my floor: that which I have heard from the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

11 The [2]burden of Dumah.
One calleth unto me out of Seir, Watchman, [3]what of
12 the night? Watchman, [3]what of the night? The watchman

[1] Heb. *son.* [2] Or, *oracle concerning* [3] Or, *what* hour

10. The application to Israel, addressed as **my threshing** (i.e. threshed one) **and my child of the threshing-floor**—forcible figurative epithets of Israel as a nation crushed and down-trodden by the brutal tyranny of Babylon (cf. ch. lxi. 15; Mi. iv. 12 f.; Jer. li. 33, &c.). The prophet seems to expect no relief for his people from the overthrow of Babylon.

THE ORACLE ON EDOM. *vv.* **11, 12.**

The prophet hears (whether in reality or in imagination it is impossible to say) an urgent cry from Seir, inquiring whether the night of distress is nearly over (*v.* 11). His reply (*v.* 12) is equivocal and confessedly incomplete; at a later time he may be able to read the signs of the times with a surer vision. The passage is too short and vague to permit any confident conclusion as to its date; but it contains nothing inconsistent with the supposition that it is from the same author as *vv.* 1—10. Towards the end of the Exile the Edomites seem to have been on friendly terms with the Babylonians, from whom they had received a considerable extension of territory (Ezek. xxxv. 10 ff., xxxvi. 5 ff.). But the supremacy of Babylon is now threatened by the victorious Cyrus, and Edom is naturally represented as anxious to learn how the unknown issue of the conflict will affect her national and commercial interests.

11. *The* **oracle** *of Dumah*] The best known place of this name is the *Dûmat el-Jendel* ("rocky Dumah") of the Arabian geographers (mentioned in Gen. xxv. 14). It lay to the north of Tema (*v.* 14) and south-east of Seir. Jerome is the sole authority for the statement that there was a Dumah in the land of Seir. The word here, however, is probably a play on the name Edom (which is found in the LXX., and in the margin of some Heb. MSS.), and may be at the same time an allusion to the mysterious character of the oracle (= "oracle of silence").

Watchman, what of the night?] "How far is the night spent: how long till the morning?" The phrase may have been used in inquiring the time of night of the city watchmen. The word "watchman" here means "guardian" and differs from that employed in *v.* 6 (one who is on the look out).

said, The morning [1]cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: [2]turn ye, come.

The [3]burden upon Arabia.
In the [4]forest [5]in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling 13

[1] Or, *is come* [2] Or, *come ye again* [3] Or, *oracle*
[4] Or, *thickets* [5] Or, according to the ancient versions, *at evening*

12. *The morning cometh, and also the night*] The watchman's answer is designedly obscure. It may mean either that the seer has obtained no clear vision of the destiny in store for Edom; or that he foresees a transient gleam of prosperity to be followed by a new night of distress; or that hope is dawning for some and gloom settling down on others.

if ye will inquire...] The answer is not final; another time the purpose of Jehovah may be more clearly indicated, if Edom earnestly desires to know it. For *turn ye, come* render with marg. **come ye again**. It is impossible to suppose that "return" is used in the sense of "be converted to the worship of Jehovah." The words for "cometh," "inquire" (twice) and "come" are Aramaic.

The oracle on Arabia. *vv.* 13—17.

A vision (*vv.* 13—15) and its interpretation (*vv.* 16, 17). A caravan of the merchant-tribe of Dedan is seen driven by stress of war from the regular route, and lurking in solitary places, destitute of food and water. The travellers are succoured by the hospitality of the neighbouring city of Tema (*vv.* 13—15). The vision symbolises a great destruction within a short time of the nomadic Arabs purposed by Jehovah the God of Israel (16 f.). Here again positive indications of date are wanting. If the oracle belongs to the same group as the two which precede, the enemy would be the Persian conquerors of Babylonia, who are represented as attacking the Arabian caravans that traded under its auspices. A similar threat against Dedan forms part of a prophecy of Jeremiah against Edom in the time of Nebuchadnezzar (xlix. 7 f.).

13. *The burden upon Arabia*] **The Oracle "In Arabia"** (or "**In the evening**"). The catchword of the heading is taken from the second word of the oracle.

in Arabia] Cf. Jer. xxv. 24. The LXX. which omits the title renders, with a different pointing, "in the evening," which gives a good sense (Ps. xxx. 5). The Massoretic reading may also be translated "in the desert," although the word occurs nowhere else in this sense. *Forest* must here mean either "scrub" or (like the corresponding Arab. *wa'r*) "rough, stony ground."

travelling companies] **caravans**, as Gen. xxxvii. 25.

14 companies of Dedanites. Unto him that [1]was thirsty they
brought water; [2]the inhabitants of the land of Tema did
15 meet the fugitives with their bread. For they fled away
from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent
16 bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the
Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years
17 of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail: and
the residue of the number of the archers, the mighty men
of the children of Kedar, shall be few: for the LORD, the
God of Israel, hath spoken it.

[1] Or, *is thirsty bring ye*
[2] Or, as otherwise read, *ye inhabitants of the land of Tema, meet*

Dedanites] Dedan (Gen. x. 7, xxv. 3) was an important trading tribe of Arabia (Ez. xxvii. 20, xxxviii. 13). Since it is mentioned in connexion with Edom (Jer. xlix. 8; Ez. xxv. 13), its possessions were probably somewhere near the north end of the Gulf of Akaba.

14. The caravans are reduced to the direst straits through having to shun the stations on the regular route where alone their stock of food and water could be replenished. The prophet calls on the inhabitants of Tema to supply their necessities. The verse should be rendered: **To the thirsty bring water, O inhabitants of the land of Tema, meet the fugitive with bread.** (See marg.)

Tema (Gen. xxv. 14; Job vi. 19) is the modern Teima in the northern highlands of Arabia, east of the great pilgrim route from Damascus to Mecca. In O.T. times it was the seat of an important commercial tribe, friendly therefore to the Dedanites.

15. The caravans have deserted the frequented paths, because of armed bands scouring the country.

16 f. The interpretation of the vision is regarded by many commentators as a later appendix similar to ch. xvi. 13 f. There is certainly a surprising resemblance between the two passages, which may suggest that they are both from the same hand.

16. *according to the years of an hireling*] See on xvi. 14.

Kedar] a tribe of pastoral nomads (Is. lx. 7; Ezek. xxvii. 21) in the Syrian desert (Jer. ii. 10), is here apparently a comprehensive designation of the north Arabian tribes (cf. Cant. i. 5; Ps. cxx. 5).

17. *the number of the archers*] Lit. "of the bows." The bow was the chief weapon of the northern Arabs, as of their progenitor Ishmael, Gen. xxi. 20.

CH. XXII. 1–14. THE INEXPIABLE SIN OF JERUSALEM.

The key to this passage—the most pessimistic of all Isaiah's prophecies—is the discordance between the mood of the prophet and the state of public feeling around him. In a time of universal mirth and festivity he

alone is overwhelmed with grief and refuses to be comforted. In the rejoicings of the populace he reads the evidence of their hopeless impenitence and insensibility, and he concludes his discourse by expressing the conviction that at last they have sinned beyond the possibility of pardon. The circumstances recall our Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem on the day of His triumphal entry (Luke xix. 41 ff.).

It may be regarded as certain that the prophecy belongs to the period of Sennacherib's invasion (701), although it is difficult to select a moment when all the elements of the highly complex situation with which it deals might have been combined. As regards the external situation, the two facts which stand out clearly are, first, that Jerusalem has been, if not actually invested, at least thrown into a panic of preparation for a siege (*vv.* 3—11); and, second, that she has experienced a signal deliverance (*vv.* 1, 13). There is no reasonable doubt that both these events belong to the past. With regard to the prophet's state of mind, the remarkable thing is that he has entirely (and to all appearance finally) lost the calm assurance of divine succour for Jerusalem which had sustained him throughout the invasion (*v.* 14). The point to be determined is whether this change of outlook preceded or followed the expedition of the Rabshakeh recorded in ch. xxxvi. xxxvii. Historically the former view is possible, especially if (as was assumed in previous editions of this commentary) Jerusalem had been blockaded *before* Hezekiah's submission (but see Introd. p. xxi f.). But psychologically it is almost inconceivable; for it would mean that Isaiah's faith had suffered a temporary but total eclipse, and that afterwards he recovered the calm courage which had hitherto sustained him during this crisis. We are therefore driven to the other alternative: that this discourse is later than the events of ch. xxxvi. f., and that the occasion of the public rejoicing that called it forth was the retreat of the Assyrian army from the borders of Palestine. On this view the prophet's change of mood, though sufficiently startling, is explicable. He was disappointed in the spiritual result of the judgement. He had expected after the great deliverance, and the fulfilment of his own daring predictions, to see the emergence of the new Israel, the remnant that was to be the nucleus of the Messianic kingdom. Bitter must have been his disenchantment when he saw that the crisis had come and gone, and left the temper of the nation as frivolous, as secular, and as insensible to the divine as it had been before.

From this point of view we must consider how far the element of prediction enters into the passage. The only *certain* reference to the future is the closing threat in *v.* 14. *Vv.* 8*b*-11 and 12, 13 are obviously retrospective; and *vv.* 1—3, in spite of Duhm's acute argument, are most naturally taken in the same sense. The doubtful part is *vv.* 5—7 (or 8*a*); and here the crucial clause is 5*a*. If the "day" there described could be supposed to lie behind the prophet, the retrospective reference of *vv.* 5—7 would be established by the historic tenses of the Hebrew. But to force a past tense on 5*a*, though a very tempting expedient, is a little hazardous, and is advocated by hardly any recent

22 The [1]burden of the valley of vision.
What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*

commentator (except Schmidt). Hence, unless we were to assume a hiatus between 5*a* and 5*b*, we must concede the possibility that *vv.* 5—7 are predictive. Whether that concession is fatal to the unity of the passage it is difficult to say. It looks at least as if something had been omitted at the beginning of *v.* 8; but that 1—8*a* and 8*b*—14 (omitting 9*b*—11 as an interpolation) are separate prophecies referring to two distinct events (Duhm) is more than can reasonably be supposed. That Isaiah should twice within a few years have been moved by a spectacle of public festivity to announce an exterminating judgement, while all the time uttering prophecies of speedy salvation, is too violent a solution to be contemplated.

The following analysis of the prophecy is influenced by this reading of its historical setting, and it is right to acknowledge that the view adopted is somewhat tentative.

i. *vv.* 1—4. While the city abandons itself to demonstrations of frantic gaiety, in spite of the disgrace that has overtaken its arms, Isaiah looks on in solitary and inconsolable anguish.

ii. *vv.* 5—7. He either sees in vision, or describes in the past, a great day of calamity, with the Assyrian thundering at the gates of Jerusalem, and striking terror into the inhabitants.

iii. *vv.* 8—11. At this point (although the transition is extremely abrupt) the prophet goes back to the past, in order to trace the evidence of the people's unbelief. In the height of the danger they had paid minute attention to human measures of defence, but with never a thought of Him whose strange work then appealed so closely to their conscience.

iv. *vv.* 12—14. And this spirit of unbelief remains with them still. It has caused them to misread the providential lesson of their escape, and to find an occasion of thoughtless revelry and merriment in what was so obviously a call to serious reflection and penitence. For such a sin Isaiah has only a "fearful looking-for of judgement" to announce.

1—4. The joy of the people and the sorrow of the prophet.

1. *The burden of the valley of vision*] Or, **The Oracle "Valley of Vision."** The heading (prefixed by an editor) is taken from a phrase in *v.* 5 (see the note).

What aileth thee now] Better: **What meanest thou, I wonder** (cf. ch. iii. 15). *wholly*] **one and all**; lit. "all of thee."

gone up to the housetops] cf. ch. xv. 3; Jud. xvi. 27; Neh. viii. 16. The flat roofs of the houses are thronged by excited citizens keeping holiday, perhaps watching some public spectacle. The prophet, wandering disconsolate through the streets, ironically inquires the reason of this unseasonable demonstration.

to the housetops? O thou that art full of shoutings, a 2
tumultuous city, a joyous town; thy slain are not slain
with the sword, neither are they dead in battle. All thy 3
rulers fled away together, they were bound [1] by the archers:
all that were found of thee were bound together, [2]they fled
afar off. Therefore said I, Look away from me, I will weep 4
bitterly; [3]labour not to comfort me, for the spoiling of the

[1] Or, *without the bow* [2] Or, *which had fled from far*
[3] Or, *hasten*

2. *full of shoutings*] cf. Zech. iv. 7. *joyous town*] **jubilant town**, as ch. xxxii. 13. A festive disposition seems to have characterised the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Isaiah's time; cf. also ch. v. 14. That their gladness on this occasion was "the forced gaiety of despair" is indicated by nothing in the passage; it was due to the sense of relief from imminent peril.

thy slain] lit. "thy pierced." *not* **pierced** *with the sword...battle*] Jerusalem's warriors have not met a glorious death on the battle-field, but have been taken prisoners and ignominiously executed (see *v.* 3). Most critics, however, take this clause and the next verse as the description of a vision which the prophet has of the future. On that view it might be more natural to think of deaths from famine and pestilence (Lam. iv. 9). But such a transition of thought would require to be indicated in some way; and there is no difficulty in adhering to the opinion of Ewald and Dillmann, that the reference is to the literal past. The Assyrian practice of impaling captives before the walls of besieged cities imparts a touch of vivid realism to Isaiah's descriptive phrase.

3. The disgraceful flight and capture of the Judean army (cf. ch. xxx. 16). The desertion or flight of Hezekiah's mercenary troops—"the Arabians (?) and his fine soldiers whom he had brought in for the defence of his capital Jerusalem"—is an incident of the campaign recorded by Sennacherib; and is very probably alluded to here.

thy rulers] **thy chieftains**,—the same word as in i. 10, there in its civil, here in its military sense.

they were bound by the archers] Rather: **without bow** (which they had thrown away) **they were bound**.

all that were found of thee] Read with LXX. **all thy strong ones** (אַמִּיצַיִךְ). *they fled afar off*] The text of the verse is possibly in some disorder. Transposing two lines, and omitting two superfluous words, we may render thus:

"All thy chieftains have fled—afar off have they fled;
All thy mighty ones were bound—without bow were they bound."

4. *Look away from me*] i.e. "leave me alone," as Job vii. 19.

labour not is strictly **press not upon me**, and *spoiling* should be **destruction**. Since the word is too strong for the havoc described in

5 daughter of my people. For it is a day of discomfiture,
and of treading down, and of perplexity, from the Lord,
the LORD of hosts, in the valley of vision; a breaking down
6 of the walls, and a crying to the [1]mountains. And Elam
bare the quiver, with [2]chariots of men *and* horsemen; and

[1] Or, *mountain* [2] Or, *troops*

vv. 2*b*, 3, we may suppose that the prophet's gaze is already turning to the future (see the next verse).

daughter of my people] The phrase, common in Jeremiah and Lamentations, occurs only here in Isaiah.

5—7. The connexion here becomes very uncertain. It seems as if *v.* 5 (from its form) must refer to the future, while *vv.* 8—11 undoubtedly go back to what is past. The transition must apparently take place either at *v.* 5*b* or *v.* 8. Now the tenses in *vv.* 6, 7 would be naturally construed as historic perfects, and at first sight it seems obvious that these verses are intimately connected with *vv.* 8 ff., and belong like them to the past. But on the other hand it has to be considered that (*a*) *v.* 5*a* is too short to stand alone; (*b*) the preparations for the siege (8 ff.) are in any case distinct from (if not prior to) the assault described in 6 f.; and (*c*) there is no evidence of an attempt to carry Jerusalem by storm during the blockade. Hence it seems *on the whole* safest, in spite of the violence of the transition at *v.* 8, to regard *vv.* 5—7 as an account of what Isaiah sees in vision, viz. the return of the enemy in force to the city.

5. The first half of the verse reads: **For a day of tumult and trampling and confusion hath Jehovah of hosts**, —"a series of inimitable assonances" (Cheyne) in the Heb. (cf. Nah. ii. 10 [Heb. 11]). The form of the sentence is the same as in ii. 12.

The words *in the valley of vision* belong (in spite of the accents) to the second half; render: **in the valley of vision** (they are) **battering down the wall, and a cry** (of distress rises) **to the mountain**. "Valley of vision" is taken by some as a proper name (valley of Hizzāyôn), though no such place is known; by others as a mystic name for Jerusalem (like Ariel, xxix. 1), which is hardly possible, since the word for "valley" denotes a deep and narrow ravine. Some particular valley round Jerusalem must be meant, most probably the Tyropœon; but why it is called the "valley of (prophetic) vision" we cannot tell. The suggestion that Isaiah lived and had his visions there is very far-fetched. Some read "valley of Hinnom" -the valley skirting the W. and S. sides of Jerusalem (Marti, Schmidt).

6. *Elam* (see on xxi. 2) and *Kîr* (not identified: 2 Ki. xvi. 9; Am. i. 5, ix. 7) are mentioned as furnishing auxiliaries to the Assyrian army. The "bow of Elam" is mentioned in Jer. xlix. 35.

with chariots of men and *horsemen*] a hopelessly difficult expression. It is tempting to read אֲרָם for אָדָם (men), and render "Aram rode (רָכַב)

Kir uncovered the shield. And it came to pass, that thy 7
choicest valleys were full of chariots, and the horsemen set
themselves in array at the gate. And he took away the 8
covering of Judah; and thou didst look in that day to the
armour in the house of the forest. And ye saw the breaches 9
of the city of David, that they were many: and ye gathered
together the waters of the lower pool. And ye numbered 10
the houses of Jerusalem, and ye brake down the houses to
fortify the wall. Ye made also a reservoir between the two 11

as horsemen"; but that is very dubious Hebrew. Duhm and others would omit אדם altogether; see Whitehouse's note, p. 252 f.

uncovered the shield] Shields when not in use were protected by a leather covering (Cæs. *de Bell. Gall.* II. 21).

7. *And it came to pass*] in the scene beheld by the prophet. But the words "could well be spared" (Gray).

set themselves in array at the gate] **take up their station towards the gate.**

8–11. The hasty preparations for a siege. Cf. 2 Chron. xxxii. 2—5, 30; 2 Ki. xx. 20.

8. *he took away the covering of Judah*] Probably "exposed the defencelessness of the state"; but the sentence is very obscure, and it is impossible to tell whether it goes with what precedes or with what follows. The subj. might be Jehovah or the enemy, or it may be indefinite.

the house of the forest] of Lebanon (1 Ki. vii. 2, x. 17). It was evidently used as an arsenal.

9. The first half reads **and the breaches of the city of David** (the citadel of Zion, 2 Sam. v. 7, 9) **ye saw** (i.e. examined) **for they were many**. Jerusalem was evidently found quite unfit to stand a siege. The water supply was still defective, as it had been 34 years before (see ch. vii. 3). The *lower pool* is not elsewhere mentioned, although its existence is implied by ch. vii. 3. It was obviously within the walls, and probably lay near the mouth of the Tyropœon Valley.

10. *And ye numbered the houses*] apparently to see which could best be spared for the purpose specified in the next clause,—"to fortify the wall," cf. Jer. xxxiii. 4.

11. The *reservoir* here referred to cannot be identified. The *old pool* is very probably the pool of Siloam (though this is not certain) and the "reservoir" would be intended to retain its surplus water.

between the two walls] a part of the city adjoining the royal gardens, where there was a gate (see 2 Ki. xxv. 4; Jer. xxxix. 4, lii. 7). The locality is doubtless the entrance of the Tyropœon Valley, where the wall of the Western Hill and that of Zion (and Ophel) met at a sharp re-entrant angle. The space so designated would be of course outside the city, but inaccessible to the besiegers through its proximity to the two walls.

walls for the water of the old pool: but ye looked not unto
[1]him that had done this, neither had ye respect unto him
12 that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord,
the LORD of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and
13 to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold, joy
and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh
and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we
14 shall die. And the LORD of hosts revealed himself in mine
ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be [2]purged from you till
ye die, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

[1] Or, *the maker thereof* [2] Or, *expiated by*

but ye looked not] This clause carries us back to *vv.* 8*b*, 9*a*, where the same two verbs ("looked," "saw") are employed. Hence Duhm and others consider the intervening section to be interpolated. But a less logical mind may feel that the contrast is rather enhanced by the "prosaic" (?) elaboration of the people's attention to the material defences of the city.

fashioned it long ago] or **formed it from afar**; cf. ch. xxxvii. 26. The sin of the rulers of Jerusalem is that same indifference to the work of Jehovah with which the prophet had charged them many years before (see v. 12). To Isaiah, history is the evolution of a consistent, predetermined plan of Jehovah, to the men of his day it was merely a confused struggle between opposing forces. Their failure to discern the hand of God in the events that had befallen them was the crowning proof of their spiritual insensibility; their ill-timed frivolity on this occasion seemed to the prophet to seal their fate.

12—14. The ignoring of Jehovah's presence in this crisis is an unpardonable sin.

12. *in that day did the Lord...call*] not only by the silent march of events, but also by the voice of His prophet: see ch. xxxii. 11. The call was to seriousness and humiliation, expressed by the customary signs of mourning. (Cf. Joel ii. 12; Am. viii. 10; Is. iii. 24, xx. 2, &c.)

13. Instead of this the people rush to drown reflexion in riotous festivities. The immediate occasion of the revelry was no doubt a great sacrifice of thanksgiving to Jehovah for their unexpected deliverance, but this only rendered their irreligious spirit more detestable to Him (cf. i. 10—17).

for to-morrow we shall die] Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 32. Probably a current proverb. But the revellers may very well have been conscious that their escape had only procured for them a precarious respite. And in the next verse Isaiah assures them that they *shall* die.

14. *revealed himself in mine ears*] The message comes to the prophet like an external voice, which he knows to be that of the Lord (cf. ch. v. 9).

Surely...] The form is that of adjuration (cf. xiv. 24).

purged from you] Better; **expiated for you**. Cf. ch. vi. 7; 1 Sam.

Thus saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, Go, get thee 15
unto this [1]treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the

[1] Or, *steward*

iii. 14. The threat neither implies that the sin could be expiated by the death of the sinner, nor means merely that guilt would lie on them as long as they lived; it is a definite intimation that the unexpiated sin will call down punishment, and the punishment will be death.

CH. XXII. 15—25. A PHILIPPIC AGAINST A PARVENU POLITICIAN.

Shebna, the minister here addressed, is supposed from his name and from Isaiah's indignation at his ambitious desire to have a magnificent sepulchre in Jerusalem, to have been a foreigner in the royal service. The office which he holds is the highest in the court, and is of course a measure of his influence with the king. That he was a partisan of the Egyptian alliance may be safely assumed, and it is likely that Isaiah had found in him the most astute and resolute opponent of the policy which he advocated. This opposition, together with hearty contempt for the character of the man, is the occasion of Isaiah's only invective against an individual. Eliakim, who is designated as his successor (*v.* 20), was probably the leader of the party favourable to Isaiah's views, and the substitution of the one minister for the other was equivalent to a radical change of policy on the part of Hezekiah. This change seems to have taken place before the crisis of the invasion, for in ch. xxxvi. 3, xxxvii. 2 we find Eliakim actually in possession of the dignity which Shebna here holds. But since the latter then occupied the lower office of secretary, we must conclude that some compromise had been arranged, and that Shebna's power was not altogether broken. The main prophecy may accordingly be dated some time before 701. *Vv.* 24 f. are a later addition, whether by Isaiah himself or by another it is impossible to say.

The passage contains three parts:

i. The denunciation of Shebna, and the announcement of his deposition and banishment, *vv.* 15—18 (19).

ii. The installation of Eliakim, and the honour of his family, *vv.* 20—23.

iii. A curious appendix, which seems to charge Eliakim with nepotism, and to anticipate the ruin of his house, *vv.* 24, 25.

15. *this treasurer*] Better: **this minister**. The "this" is contemptuous. The word for "minister" (*sôkēn*) is not elsewhere found in the O.T.; the fem. (*sôkenet*) is used of Abishag the Shunammite in 1 Ki. i. 2, 4. It may mean "associate" (like the "king's friend" of 2 Sam. xv. 37, xvi. 16; 1 Ki. iv. 5; 1 Chron. xxvii. 33), or, more probably, "administrator" (the Assyrian *šaknu*). In the latter sense it occurs on a nearly contemporary Phœnician inscription (Cooke, *North-Sem. Inscriptions*, pp. 52 f.).

even unto Shebna] **against Shebna**.... The words are the title of the

16 house, *and say*, What doest thou here? and whom hast
thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out here a sepulchre?
hewing him out a sepulchre on high, graving an habitation
17 for himself in the rock! Behold, the LORD will hurl thee
away violently [1]as a *strong* man; yea, he will [2]wrap thee
18 up closely. He will surely [3]turn and toss thee like a ball

[1] Or, *O thou* strong *man* [2] Or, *lay fast hold on thee*
[3] Or, *wind thee round and round like a ball* and toss thee

oracle which seems to have crept into a wrong place in the text from the margin.

which is over the house] (cf. 1 Ki. iv. 6, xviii. 3). This office has been aptly compared to that of "mayor of the palace" under the Merovingian kings.

16. We may imagine the meeting between Isaiah and the vizier to have taken place at the sepulchre which the latter, after the Eastern fashion, was having prepared in his lifetime. By this act the *novus homo* asserted his equality with the aristocracy of Jerusalem, a piece of presumption which evidently kindles the ire of the prophet.

What **hast thou to do** *here? and whom* (as kindred or descendants) *hast thou here?*] i.e. "Thou neither hast the rights of a citizen, nor canst claim to be the founder of a family." Shebna's grave was simply the monument of his own vulgar and ostentatious vanity.

that thou hast hewed...here] (see below) in so conspicuous a position. That Shebna actually placed his tomb amongst those of the kings and princes of Judah is not to be assumed; but he had plainly chosen a pretentious situation.

hewing him out a sepulchre on high, graving...rock!] Ejaculations of unutterable scorn. The use of the third person suggests that there were bystanders.

an habitation] i.e. a tomb: cf. "house" in xiv. 18; Job iii. 15.

17, 18. The doom of Shebna is set forth in language of extraordinary force and passion.

17. *will hurl thee away violently*, **O thou man**] Gray (p. 379), noting the close resemblance to Jer. xxii. 26, points out that these words would naturally be followed immediately by "into a spacious land," *v.* 18; and gives reasons for suspecting confusion in the intervening text, which is in several points obscure. The next words *will wrap thee up closely* are of doubtful meaning. The verb may be the equivalent of an Arabic verb, meaning "seize," which gives an appropriate idea, although it is the solitary instance in the O.T. Render accordingly: **and will seize thee firmly** (lit. "with a seizing").

18. The first half of the verse may be read: **He will wind thee up in a bundle like a ball into a spacious land** (lit. "a land broad on both sides," as Gen. xxxiv. 21; Jud. xviii. 10). The words *and toss thee* have to be supplied from the context (though they are found in LXX. and

into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory, thou shame of thy lord's house. 18
And I will thrust thee from thine office, and from thy 19
station shall he pull thee down. And it shall come to pass 20
in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of
Hilkiah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen 21
him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into
his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of
Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the 22
house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall

Vulg.); the construction is pregnant (but see on *v.* 17). The figure expresses banishment from Jehovah's territory, the "spacious land" referring probably to the Assyrian Empire.

there shalt thou die (cf. Am. vii. 17), *and there shall be* **thy splendid chariots**, *thou shame of thy lord's house*] The repeated "there" is in emphatic contrast to the "here" of *v.* 16. To ride forth with "chariots and horses" was once regarded as a sign of aspiring to the highest dignity (2 Sam. xv. 1; 1 Ki. i. 5); later it seems to have been the privilege of the princely caste (Jer. xvii. 25), peculiarly offensive, therefore, in a foreign adventurer. It would certainly give a keener edge to the prophet's irony if for "chariot(s)" we could read "tomb" (מִשְׁכַּן [*v.* 16] changed into מִרְכַּב [LXX. ?]) (Gray, after Condamin). The concentrated bitterness of the last words points to something worse than political differences as the cause of Isaiah's antipathy to Shebna.

19. The subject here is Jehovah; the second verb should be emended to 1st pers. After *v.* 18, the verse reads like an anti-climax, but it is added to prepare for

20—23. The elevation of the head of the prophetic party at court.

20. Eliakim is called *my servant* as Isaiah is in ch. xx. 3.

21. *robe* ("tunic")...*girdle*] The palace officials seem to have worn distinctive liveries (1 Ki. x. 5); the uniform of the vizier was apparently a tunic and a girdle of special pattern. The word for "girdle" is used elsewhere only of the priestly girdle (see Ex. xxxix. 29, &c.). For *strengthen*, translate **gird**.

he shall be a father] a beneficent administrator, as Shebna had not been. How much in the East the welfare of the people depends on the character of the vizier is known from the legends of Haroun-al-Rashid. For the expression cf. Gen. xlv. 8; 1 Macc. xi. 32.

22. *the key of the house of David*] The symbol of unlimited authority over the royal household, carrying with it a similar influence in all affairs of state; like Pharaoh's signet-ring in the hands of Joseph, Gen. xli. 40—44. *upon his shoulder*] The primitive wooden key still used in Palestine was of considerable size and weight and was literally carried on the shoulder (see Cheyne, *Polychrome Bible*, p. 160). Cf. ix. 6; and with the whole verse comp. Rev. iii. 7.

open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none
23 shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place;
and he shall be for a throne of glory to his father's house.
24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's
house, the offspring and the issue, every small vessel, from
25 the vessels of cups even to all the vessels of flagons. In
that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that was
fastened in a sure place give way; and it shall be hewn
down, and fall, and the burden that was upon it shall be
cut off; for the LORD hath spoken it.

23. *a nail*] usually a "tent-peg" (and so probably in a figurative sense, Zech. x. 4); but also (Ez. xv. 3) a peg on which household utensils are suspended. The latter idea (according to *v.* 25) must be intended here.

a throne of glory] Better: **a seat of honour** (see 2 Ki. iv. 10).

to his father's house]—all his nearest kindred, who are through him advanced from obscurity to great dignity.

24, 25. If *v.* 24 stood alone it might be barely possible to interpret it in a sense favourable to Eliakim. But taken in connexion with *v.* 25 it seems to convey an imputation of the unworthy exercise of patronage on his part,—a filling of important offices with worthless relatives and dependents. Many commentators, it is true, hold that *v.* 25 refers back to the fall of Shebna, but this is quite arbitrary. Shebna is *not* likened to a "nail in a sure place" and it is clearly implied that he had no "father's house" in Jerusalem (*v.* 16). It is hardly credible that Isaiah should have uttered such a threat along with the promises in *vv.* 20—23; but the last two verses may be an appendix written later, when abuses of trust in Eliakim's family had begun to display themselves.

24. An under-current of satire seems unmistakeable.

all the glory] perhaps: **the whole weight** (see "burden" in next verse).

the offspring and the issue] **the scions and the offshoots** (Cheyne). The second expression is decidedly contemptuous, and so (more or less) are all that follow. It cannot be to Eliakim's credit that the bulk of his relations are likened to the meanest kitchen utensils.

every small vessel] **every meanest vessel** (Dav. *Synt.* § 32, R. 5).

25. The fall of Eliakim's house, described under the same metaphor. It is not necessarily implied that the minister himself lived to see this reverse of fortune; living or dead, his name was the "peg" of the family's nobility, and when the crash came, it might truly be said that the "peg fastened in a sure place" had been removed.

Ch. XXIII. An Oracle on Tyre.

The unique position occupied by Tyre in the ancient world engaged the attention of more than one Hebrew prophet. Ezekiel, in one of the most original and elaborate of his foreign prophecies (ch. xxvi.—xxviii.), where he announces her impending overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar, shews the liveliest appreciation of the genius of that great commercial city, her unbounded enterprise, her devotion to material interests, and her self-deifying pride. Very similar in spirit is the simpler and shorter passage now before us, which, however, is not directed exclusively against Tyre, but embraces the older though less famous Zidon, and the whole Phœnician sea-board.

The chapter is clearly divided into two sections :—

i. *vv.* 1—14. A poem in three strophes on the destruction of the Phœnician cities and harbours, which is conceived as having already taken place.

(1) *vv.* 1—5. Ships of Tarshish, homeward bound, are dismayed on their arrival at Cyprus by the intelligence that the harbours of Phœnicia are closed to them (1); the once populous and thriving coast-land lies desolate (2, 3); the sea is now a childless mother and forgets that she ever had offspring (4); Egypt is stricken with terror at the report of the fall of Tyre (5).

(2) *vv.* 6–9. The inhabitants of Phœnicia are ironically urged to leave the joyous cities which had been theirs from time immemorial, and seek refuge in their colonies beyond the sea (6, 7). For this is the purpose of Jehovah, to make an end of the regal power of Tyre, and cast contempt on all earthly greatness (8, 9).

(3) *vv.* 10—14. But Jehovah's power reaches over the sea, and not even in their own colonies can the exiled Phœnicians find rest. The distant Tarshish disowns their authority (?), the nearer Cyprus is reduced to ruin. At the obscure *v.* 13 we lose the thread of the writer's thought, but in *v.* 14 the poem ends, as it had begun, with an apostrophe to the ships of Tarshish, whose haven is demolished.

ii. *vv.* 15—18 form an appendix written in a prose style (with the exception of the "harlot's song," a snatch of popular poetry, in *v.* 16). It announces the restoration of Tyre after the lapse of seventy years, but a restoration under entirely changed conditions, in which the gains of Tyre shall be consecrated to Jehovah and the use of His people.

There appear to be no valid reasons for refusing to ascribe the authorship of *vv.* 1—14 to Isaiah, although certainty on that point is naturally unattainable. The most obvious difficulty would be the reference to "the land of the Chaldeans" in *v.* 13; but there the text is in all probability corrupt (see the notes). There are two occasions in the time of Isaiah to which the prophecy has been referred. The earlier is the campaign of Shalmaneser V (727—722) against Phœnicia, described at length in a fragment of Menander of Ephesus (Josephus, *Ant.* IX. 14, 2). Shalmaneser is said to have blockaded the insular part of Tyre for

23 The [1]burden of Tyre.
Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Kittim

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*

five years; but as his entire reign was only about five years, it is probable that the siege (like that of Samaria) was finished by Sargon. That the city was captured is nowhere stated, and the reticence of Sargon rather suggests that the siege issued in a capitulation. Phœnicia was again ravaged by Sennacherib in the expedition of 701, just before the invasion of Philistia and Judah, when the king of Zidon actually fled to Cyprus. Tyre is not mentioned in the Assyrian record of this campaign. Either of these invasions would furnish an adequate occasion for Isaiah's prophecy, though the second is perhaps less probable than the first. It may at least be said that the lyrical character of the passage is more intelligible when the prophet was a disinterested spectator of events in Phœnicia, than under the strain of excitement with which he faced the crisis of 701. It is true that Tyre did not then suffer the complete overthow which is here contemplated; but it was nevertheless the first time that her existence had been seriously threatened, and the absence of a literal fulfilment affords no presumption against the genuineness of a prophecy.

Other sieges of Tyre, later than the time of Isaiah, have been thought of as the occasion of the prophecy; and two in particular. (*a*) The long but unsuccessful blockade by Nebuchadnezzar in 585–573, which is the theme of Ezekiel's predictions in xxvi. xxvii. (comp. Ez. xxix. 17–20). (*b*) The siege and capture of the city by Alexander the Great in 332 the first recorded conquest of insular Tyre.

The appendix (*vv.* 15–18) bears the stamp of a later origin. The seventy years' duration of the humiliation of Tyre may be based on Jeremiah's (xxv. 11 f.) determination of the period of Chaldean supremacy, and the use to which the riches of Tyre are to be put (*v.* 18) is perhaps suggested by such late prophecies as Is. xlv. 14, lx. 11, lxi. 6. The case, therefore, appears to be parallel to that of the oracle on Egypt in ch. xix. In both we have a prophecy which is presumably Isaianic, followed by a supplement which there is reason to regard as post-exilic.

1. The returning ships are apprised, at the last stage of their voyage, of the disaster that has overtaken their mother-country. *Ships of Tarshish* may mean here, literally, "ships trading with Tarshish" (Tartessus) at the mouth of the Guadalquivir in Spain. See on ii. 16.

for it is laid waste] Read, as in *v.* 14, **For your fortress has been destroyed.** The subject (מְעוּזְּכֶן) is either accidentally omitted, or disguised in the two following words through textual corruption.

no house, no entering in] i.e. "no house (harbour) to enter in." Cf.

it is revealed to them. Be still, ye inhabitants of the [1]isle; 2
thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea,
have replenished. And on great waters the seed of Shihor, 3
the harvest of the Nile, was her revenue; and she was the

[1] Or, *coastland*

ch. xxiv. 10 "every house is shut up so that none can enter." But it is doubtful if this sense, or indeed any sense, can be extracted from the Hebrew words.

from the land of Kittim] i.e. Kition, in the south of Cyprus, founded by the Phœnicians. The name was extended to the whole island, and ultimately in biblical usage to the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean (Dan. xi. 30, &c.).

it is revealed to them] The ruin of Tyre is there announced to them.

2. The prophet next apostrophises the *inhabitants of the* **coast** (render so, as in ch. xx. 6), i.e. Phœnicia, calling them to *be still*, or rather **dumb**, with bewilderment.

the merchants (in Heb. collective sing.) *of Zidon*] Zidon is generally interpreted as standing throughout this prophecy for Phœnicia as a whole. This is perhaps unnecessary, although it can easily be justified by usage (see Deut. iii. 9; Jud. iii. 3; 1 Ki. xi. 1, &c.). Zidon is said to have been the most ancient of the Phœnician settlements, and its merchants might naturally be spoken of as having founded the commercial prosperity of the country.

have replenished] The whole context becomes more intelligible if we change מלאוך to מלאכו, "his messengers" (so Duhm), or still better to מלאכתו, "his business," and join this to the next verse. See on *v.* 3 below.

3. The easiest translation would be: **and on great waters the seed of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile, (was) her revenue, and it** (i.e. her revenue) **was the gain of the nations**. *Shihor* might be a name for the Nile, as in Jer. ii. 18; and the meaning would be that the revenue of Tyre (or Phœnicia) was derived from the sea-traffic in Egyptian grain. This was no doubt the case to some extent; but to suppose that the corn trade with Egypt was a principal source of wealth to Tyre is contrary to all the information we possess. The expression of the thought, moreover, is involved and enigmatic, and even if we call to our aid the subtle suggestion that Tyre, with no agriculture of her own, nevertheless reaped a rich harvest by her command of the sea, the idea is still unworthy of Isaiah, and of the rest of this poem. The translation *mart* in R.V., instead of "gain" or "merchandise" is hardly justifiable.

Emending the last word of *v.* 2 as suggested above, and following

4 mart of nations. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea
hath spoken, the strong hold of the sea, saying, I have not
travailed, nor brought forth, neither have I nourished young
5 men, nor brought up virgins. [1]When the report cometh to
Egypt, they shall be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.
6 Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the [2]isle.
7 Is this your joyous *city*, whose antiquity is [3]of ancient days,
8 whose feet carried her afar off to sojourn? Who hath pur-

[1] Or, *As at the report concerning Egypt, so &c.* [2] Or, *coastland*
[3] Or, *of ancient days? her own feet shall carry &c.*

Duhm in the excision of "harvest of the Nile" as a gloss on "seed of Shihor," and in some minor changes, we render vv. 2, 3 as follows:

> Be dumb, inhabitants of the coast, merchant-people of Zidon,
> Who traversed the sea, whose business (was) on many waters,
> Whose revenue (was) the seed of Shihor, the merchandise of the nations.

the sea hath spoken] The fine figure of the lonely sea denying that she ever had children is somewhat marred by the introduction of the next words "the stronghold of the sea," as if the poet had corrected himself by an afterthought, and changed the subject of personification from the sea to Tyre. One is tempted to remove the clause as a gloss.

nourished...brought up] See on i. 2.

5. Assyria being the common enemy of Egypt and Tyre, the report of the latter's fall is received with the utmost anxiety in Egypt.

6. The second strophe commences here with a summons to the Phœnicians to betake themselves to their Spanish colony for refuge, their own country being at the mercy of the invader. So the Tyrians, when attacked by Alexander the Great, sent all those unfit for war to Carthage, another western colony. Gesenius instances also the projected emigration of the Dutch merchants to Batavia in 1672 if the independence of Holland should be overthrown.

7. The reference is of course to Tyre, the principal subject of the prophecy.

whose antiquity...days] Next to Zidon, Tyre was regarded as the most ancient city of Phœnicia. Her priests claimed for their temple the fabulous antiquity of 2300 years in the time of Herodotus (II. 44); Josephus dates the city's foundation 240 years before the building of Solomon's Temple (*Ant.* VIII. 3, 1).

whose feet **used to carry** *her...sojourn*] The reference is not to the future captivity or flight of the Tyrians (for which the expressions are unsuitable) but to the long journeys and residence in foreign parts of her enterprising merchants.

8, 9. This is the execution of Jehovah's purpose, and therefore irreversible.

posed this against Tyre, [1]the crowning *city*, whose merchants
are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the
earth? The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to [2]stain the 9
pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honour-
able of the earth. [3]Pass through thy land as the Nile, O 10
daughter of Tarshish; there is no girdle *about thee* any
more. He hath stretched out his hand over the sea, he hath 11
shaken the kingdoms: the LORD hath given commandment

[1] Or. *that giveth crowns* [2] Heb. *profane*. [3] Or, *Overflow*

the crowning city] Or, **the crown-giver**. Tyre is rightly so-called, inasmuch as some of her colonies (Kition, Tarshish, and Carthage) were ruled by kings, subject to the mother-city.

whose traffickers] The word is probably the gentilic noun "Canaanite" which is used with the sense of "trader" in Job xli. 6 [Heb. xl. 30]; Prov. xxxi. 24; Zech. xiv. 21, as the collective name "Canaan" is in older passages (Hos. xii. 7; Zeph. i. 11). It was of course from the commercial proclivities of the Phœnicians themselves that the word acquired this secondary significance amongst the Hebrews. The petty trade of Palestine seems to have been largely in the hands of Tyrian dealers (Neh. xiii. 16 ff.), and hence a Canaanite came to mean a merchant, just as a Chaldean came to mean an astrologer and a "Scotchman" in some parts of England meant a pedlar.

9. Jehovah has purposed it in accordance with a fixed principle of His government.

to stain (render **to desecrate**) *the pride of all glory*] The thought is the same as in ch. ii. 12 ff. For this use of the verb rendered "desecrate," cf. Ez. xxviii. 7.

10—14. The third strophe, as usually explained, deals mainly with the emancipation of the Phœnician colonies from the somewhat stringent control of Tyre. But the passage presents many insoluble difficulties; and from the utter uncertainty as to the meaning of *v.* 13 the general sense is doubtful.

as the Nile] The people of Tarshish are now as free of the land they live in as the Nile is of Egypt in the time of the annual inundation! This is not a tolerable sense, but the attempt to amend the text is hopeless.

there is no girdle about thee *any more*] The "girdle" (cf. Ps. cix. 19) is supposed to be a symbol of the restraints hitherto imposed on the colonists by Tyre. But nowhere else is a man represented as hampered by his own girdle; the removal of it is rather a synonym for weakness (Job xii. 21—the same root as here—cf. Is. v. 27). Perhaps מזח (girdle) is an error for מעז (*vv.* 4, 11, 14), "fortress."

11. *stretched out his hand*] Cf. ch. v. 25, xiv. 26, 27. The *kingdoms* are specially Phœnicia and her dependencies.

concerning [1]Canaan, to destroy the strong holds thereof.
12 And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed
virgin daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Kittim; even
13 there shalt thou have no rest. Behold, the land of the
Chaldeans; this people [2]is no more; the Assyrian [3]hath
appointed it for [4]the beasts of the wilderness: they set up
[5]their towers, they [6]overthrew the palaces thereof; he made

[1] Or, *the merchant* people [2] Or, *was not* [3] Or, *founded*
[4] Or, *them that dwell in the wilderness* [5] Or, *the towers thereof*
[6] Or, *raised up*

Canaan] Marg. "the merchant *people*": see on *v.* 8. "Canaan" is the name used by the Phœnicians of themselves and their colonists, but this is the only example in the Old Test. of its restriction to Phœnicia.

12. *And he said*] What follows may be regarded as the "commandment" referred to in *v.* 11. Or the word may be a gloss.

O thou oppressed virgin daughter of Zidon] The epithet "virgin" (which, however, is rhythmically superfluous, and is wanting in the LXX.) might be applied to Zidon as a fortress hitherto unviolated by a conqueror.

13. Every attempt to extract a meaning from the verse as it stands is beset by insuperable difficulties. Perhaps the least improbable suggestion is that the fate of Chaldea is mentioned as a warning example to Tyre. R.V. gives a fairly good sense; only, "this people is no more," and "appointed," are hardly possible renderings of the Hebrew. The reference is supposed to be to one (probably the last) of Sennacherib's three conquests of Babylonia, which were certainly carried out with a thoroughness which would justify the terms of the prophecy. But is there any evidence that Babylonia was known as the "land of the Chaldeans" before the rise of the Chaldean Empire? There is none in the Bible. The text is certainly in disorder, and there is little hope of recovering the original reading. Ewald's attractive emendation of "Canaanites" for "Chaldeans" fails to meet the case, for it retains the same mistranslations as R.V.; moreover, the exclamation "Behold the land of the Canaanites" surely comes too late after so much has been said of the ruin of this very land. The most acute analysis of the verse is that of Duhm, although, as is usual with this commentator, it involves extensive manipulation of the text. To the original prophecy he assigns only the first and last clauses, and for "Chaldeans" he substitutes "Kittim": Behold the land of Kittim, he (Jehovah) hath made it a ruin"—a continuation of the thought of the preceding verse. The intermediate clauses are regarded as an interpolation, and are ingeniously (but dubiously) explained as follows: "this is the people that was founded by the sea-farers (צִיִּים cf. Num. xxiv. 24), they erected its watch-towers, its cities (עָרָיו), and its palaces."

it a ruin. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strong hold is 14
laid waste. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre 15
shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of
one king: after the end of seventy years [1]it shall be unto
Tyre as in the song of the harlot. Take an harp, go about 16
the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet
melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.
And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, 17
that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall return to her
hire, and shall play the harlot with all the kingdoms of the
world upon the face of the earth. And her merchandise 18

[1] Or, *shall Tyre sing as an harlot*

14. The poem closes as it began with an apostrophe to the ships of Tarshish.

15—18. The appendix. Tyre shall be forgotten for seventy years; afterwards she shall resume her commercial activity, but its profits shall be dedicated to Jehovah's people.

15. *seventy years*] The period fixed by Jeremiah for the duration of the Exile and the dominion of the Chaldean Empire (ch. xxv. 11 f., xxix. 10). The number occurs frequently in the later literature: Zech. i. 12, vii. 5; Dan. ix. 2 ff.; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. It is to be noted that in all these cases there is a reference more or less explicit to Jeremiah's prediction; and the use of the number here is probably to be accounted for in the same way. Ezekiel had used the number "forty" in a precisely similar manner (ch. iv. 6, xxix. 13).

according to the days of one king] A very ambiguous phrase. Possibly it denotes a fixed, unalterable order of things, such as is maintained by the even rule of a single monarch. Some take it to mean "during the existence of one dynasty."

it shall be... harlot] **it shall happen to Tyre according to the song of the harlot,**—evidently a well-known popular ballad, quoted in the next verse.

16. The song of the harlot, celebrating the wiles by which a forgotten prostitute seeks to regain her influence. The song has a light, dancing rhythm, and consists of six lines of two words each.

make sweet melody] Better: **play skilfully.**

17. The application of the song to Tyre. The comparison of commerce to prostitution is found in Rev. xviii. 3 and perhaps in Nah. iii. 4. Here it signalises the mercenary motive which was prominent in Tyre's dealings with other nations.

shall return to her hire] Shall resume her former lucrative activity. The last word is a technical term for the hire of a harlot.

18. *merchandise* and *hire* are synonymous; the one is the literal, the other the metaphorical designation of the same fact.

and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for [1]durable clothing.

[1] Or, *stately*

holiness to the LORD] i.e. "dedicated" to Jehovah (in opposition to the letter of Deut. xxiii. 18). The word has no ethical sense; and the idea of "commerce as the handmaid of religion," if by that it is meant that Tyre's commerce is to be conducted in a religious spirit, is foreign to the passage. Tyre is still a "harlot" as of old, and her conversion to the true God does not appear to be contemplated here.

shall not be treasured nor laid up] as formerly, for the benefit of Tyre herself. Those *that dwell before the LORD* are the Jewish people, who according to another prophecy (ch. lxi. 6) are the priests of humanity.

For *durable* read **stately**, as marg. The word is not found elsewhere.

For the idea of the verse, comp. ch. xlv. 14, xlix. 22 ff., lx. 6, 9 ff.; Hag. ii. 7 ff.

CHAPTERS XXIV.—XXVII.

It is admitted on all hands that this interesting and difficult group of chapters, although without a heading, forms a distinct section of the book of Isaiah. They consist of a single connected prophecy (xxiv. 1—23, xxv. 6—8, xxvi. 20, 21, xxvii. 1, 12, 13) interspersed with lyrical and devotional passages, which appear to interrupt the sequence of thought. The general theme is one of the most familiar in prophecy; it is the "day of the LORD" in its terrors, and with its blessed consequences for Israel and for humanity. But the treatment of that theme is in many respects unique in the prophetic literature. That the writer had a definite historical situation in view is abundantly manifest; but its features are designedly veiled by the use of mysterious and symbolical language, the precise significance of which frequently eludes our grasp. This is one characteristic of the class of writings known as apocalypses, and the strongly-marked apocalyptic character of the ideas and imagery has impressed all modern commentators. There is perhaps some risk of exaggerating this feature; if we compare the passage with a typical apocalypse, like the book of Daniel, the differences are certainly more striking than the resemblances. Of the two most distinctive features of the Apocalypse—the concealing of the author's identity under some great name of the past, and the detailed presentation of history in the symbolism of prediction—there is here not a trace. In religious interest the chapters are among the most noteworthy in the prophets. Two great truths in particular, the universality of salvation and the hope of immortality, stand out with a clearness and boldness of conception nowhere surpassed in the Old Testament.

The critical questions which arise in connexion with these chapters

Behold, the LORD maketh the [1]earth empty, and maketh 24

[1] Or, *land* and so in vv. 3, 4, &c.

are so intricate, and depend so much on the explanation of obscure allusions, that it will be convenient to economise space by postponing the consideration of them until the detailed exposition is finished.

Ch. XXIV. The day of Judgement and its premonitory signs.

The chapter is mainly an announcement of the last judgement, but partly also a gloomy survey of the actual state of the world. The writer feels that he is living in the last days, and in the universal wretchedness and confusions of the age he seems to discern the "beginning of sorrows." His thoughts glide almost imperceptibly from the one point of view to the other, now describing the distress and depression which exist, and now the more terrible visitation which is imminent. It is only at *v.* 21 that the transition is finally made to the absolute language of prophecy. The line of thought is as follows:

vv. 1–3. The prophecy opens with a "word" of Jehovah,—the announcement of an imminent and sweeping catastrophe affecting the whole earth, and involving all ranks and classes of society in a common destruction.

vv. 4–9. The earth is described as withering under a curse, because of the universal depravity and guilt of its inhabitants (4–6). Wine and music, the customary tokens of social enjoyment, have ceased; life has lost its zest: the world is profoundly unhappy (7–9).

vv. 10–12 depict the desolation and misery of an unnamed city, which, however, is but typical of the state of things everywhere.

v. 13. Resuming the language of prophecy, the writer foretells, under an image borrowed from Isaiah, the almost complete extermination of the race of men (cf. *v.* 6).

vv. 14–16. Here for a moment, "the vision of ruin is interrupted: borne from afar, over the western waters, the chorus of praise rising from the lips of the redeemed, falls upon the prophet's ear" (Driver). Yet, under the influence of his immediate surroundings, he feels that such rejoicing is premature; and the response of his heart is a cry of agony. For he knows that judgement has not yet had its perfect work; and accordingly, in

vv. 17–20, he returns to his main theme, accumulating images of destruction, in order to set forth the appalling magnitude of the catastrophe about to overwhelm the earth.

vv. 21–23. Here the prophecy reaches its climax in the announcement of Jehovah's appearance to vanquish the powers of evil in heaven and in the high places of the world, and to establish His everlasting throne in visible splendour on Mount Zion.

1–3 briefly announce the theme of the whole discourse, a final and universal judgement on the world.

1. *Behold, the LORD maketh...waste*] The construction in Heb. is

it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad
2 the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people,
so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master;
as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer,
so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower;
as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to
3 him. The earth shall be utterly emptied, and utterly
4 spoiled; for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth
mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and
fadeth away, [1]the lofty people of the earth do languish.
5 The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof;

[1] Or, *the high ones of the people*

the *fut. instans*,—"is about to empty." The metaphor of the verse (cf. Nah. ii. 10) is exceedingly expressive, the words being "those which were used for cleaning a dirty dish" (G. A. Smith). Cf. 2 Ki. xxi. 13. The language exhibits the fondness for assonance which is a marked peculiarity of the writer's style, far in excess of anything of the kind in Isaiah.

the earth] Not "the land" (marg.) of Judah or Palestine. "The prophecy leaps far beyond all particular or national conditions."

2. The judgement affects all classes alike, without distinction of rank or fortune.

as with the people...priest] Cf. Hos. iv. 9. It would hardly be safe to infer from this proverbial expression that at the time of the author the priests formed the aristocracy of the Jewish people. *the buyer...the seller*] Ez. vii. 12. *lender...borrower*] Prov. xxii. 7. *the taker...the giver of usury*] Jer. xv. 10.

4 6. The earth lies under a curse on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. The language of prophecy gives place to description.

4. *mourneth...languisheth...fadeth away*] Another instance of paronomasia in the original. Cf. ch. xxxiii. 9; Hos. iv. 3; Joel i. 10.

the lofty people] Lit. "the height of the people," i.e. **the noblest of the people**. It is the only case where the word is so used (though cf. Eccles. x. 6), and the expression is very peculiar. A slight emendation would produce the sense: "the height [i.e. heaven, cf. *v.* 21] languishes together with the earth."

5. *The earth also is polluted* (literally, **profaned**) *under the inhabitants thereof*] That the land of Israel is profaned by the sins of its people, is a prominent idea in the O.T. (see Jer. iii. 9; Nu. xxxv. 33, &c.): the conception is here extended to the whole earth. The condition of the world resembles that which preceded the Deluge (Gen. *vi.* 11).

because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath 6
the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein
are found guilty: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are
burned, and few men left. The new wine mourneth, the 7
vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh. The mirth 8
of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth,
the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine 9
with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that
drink it. The city of [1]confusion is broken down: every 10

[1] Or, *wasteness* See Gen. i. 2.

changed the ordinance] Rather, **disregarded** (lit. "passed by") **ordinances.** For *the laws* render **laws.**

the everlasting covenant] The expression is taken from Gen. ix. 16, and refers to the covenant made after the flood with Noah and his family as representatives of the human race. The sin of the world lies in the violation of these fundamental dictates of morality, especially the law against murder, which is the principal stipulation of the Noachic covenant (Gen. ix. 5, 6). The conception is probably a late one.

6. *hath* **a** *curse devoured the earth*] Cf. Zech. v. 3.

are found guilty] Cf. Jer. ii. 3.

the inhabitants of the earth are burned] or **burn** under the curse, which is the expression of the divine wrath (Rev. xvi. 8). The verb (*ḥarar*) means "to glow" (Ez. xxiv. 11) or "be parched" (Job xxx. 30), not "be burned up."

few men left] Desolating and protracted wars have reduced the population of all countries; but the process of extermination is not yet at an end (see *v.* 13).

7—9. Joy has vanished from the earth.

7. Cf. Joel i. 10, 12.

8. 9. On the use of music at feasts, along with wine, see ch. v. 11, 12; Am. vi. 5. The verbs in *v.* 9 should be rendered in the present tense.

10—12. Even the "city," usually the scene of busy and joyous life, shares in the universal sadness. It is difficult to say whether a particular city is meant, or whether the word is used collectively for cities in general. The fulness of the picture gives the impression that the writer has a particular city before his mind, although it may stand as a type of many others throughout the world. If this be so, it is most natural to refer the description to Jerusalem, where the prophecy seems to have been written. But no identification is entirely satisfactory.

10. *The city of confusion*] (or **of chaos**, Gen. i. 2) need not mean "the city destined to become a chaos," still less "the city of idolatry," which of course would be epithets inapplicable to Jerusalem. It may simply be equivalent to "the wasted city."

11 house is shut up, that no man may come in. There is a
crying in the streets because of the wine; all joy is dark-
12 ened, the mirth of the land is [1]gone. In the city is left
13 desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction. For
thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples,
as the [2]shaking of an olive tree, as the grape gleanings
14 when the vintage is done. These shall lift up their voice,
they shall shout; for the majesty of the LORD they cry aloud
15 from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the [3]east,
even the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, in the [4]isles
of the sea.

[1] Heb. *gone into captivity.* [2] Heb. *beating.*
[3] Or, *lights* Or, *fires* [4] Or, *coastlands*

every house...come in] (cf. ch. xxiii. 1) i.e. the surviving inhabitants have barred their doors, suspicious of the intrusion of unbidden guests.

11. *a crying...because of the wine*] which has failed (*v.* 7). The word for *streets*, meaning strictly "that which is without," is by some rendered "fields"; but this is less natural in the present connexion. It has been suggested, however, that the line stood originally after *v.* 7 *a* (Gray).

all joy is darkened] Lit. "has become evening" (1 Sa. xvii. 16). It may be better to transpose two consonants and read **has passed away**.

the mirth of the **earth** *is gone*] Lit. "gone into exile" (marg.).

12. *In the city is left desolation*] after its mirth has gone into banishment.

13. The whole human race must perish, with the exception of an insignificant remnant. The images are borrowed from ch. xvii. 6, and are used in the same sense. Comp. ch. xiii. 12.

14—16. Already, indeed, the prophet can hear songs of praise ascending from distant parts of the earth, hailing the dawn of a better day; but he himself cannot share these enthusiastic hopes. It is not likely that this representation is purely ideal. Events must have occurred which excited the premature expectation of an immediate deliverance. It is difficult to conceive the historical situation which is presupposed. The most natural supposition will be that the singers referred to are Israelites of the Dispersion, who follow with sympathetic interest the development of some great crisis in the fortunes of the people of God, but whose vision is unable to perceive the darker signs of the times which are manifest to the prophet. A more exact determination of the circumstances must depend on the date which is found best to harmonise all the indications of the prophecy.

14. *These* [*shall*] *lift up their voice*] The pronoun at the beginning is emphatic and stands in contrast to the "I" of *v.* 16. The last words *from the sea* (i.e. the Mediterranean) point to the West as the quarter whence the songs of triumph proceed. Cf. "in the coasts," *v.* 15.

15. The words are those of the hymn of praise from over the sea, as

From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard 16
songs, glory to the righteous. But I said, [1]I pine away,
I pine away, woe is me! the treacherous dealers have dealt
treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very
treacherously. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon 17
thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, 18
that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into
the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit
shall be taken in the snare: for the windows on high are
opened, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The 19
earth is utterly broken, the earth is clean dissolved, the
earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall stagger like a 20

[1] Heb. *Leanness to me.*

is shewn by the particle *Wherefore*, referring to the unexpressed cause of rejoicing.

in the east] strictly "the (region of) lights," which is the translation adopted by the majority of commentators. The idea would then be that the West calls on the East to join in the praise of Jehovah. But the form does not occur elsewhere and is not improbably written by mistake for "coasts," which is repeated in the next line in accordance with what is called "the ascending rhythm."

the LORD, the God of Israel] The singers, therefore, are in all probability Israelites.

in the isles] **in the coasts.**

16. Other voices *from the uttermost part* (strictly, "the skirt") *of the earth* are heard singing "**Beauty** *to the righteous*," i.e. the righteous people, Israel. But these jubilant utterances of his more fortunately situated fellow-believers only extort from the prophet a cry of despair.

I pine away] Lit. "emaciation to me."

the treacherous dealers...] Cf. ch. xxi. 2, xxxiii. 1. Assonance is here carried to an extreme: "deceivers deceive, yea with deceit do deceivers deceive."

17—20. This description of the judgement on the earth and its inhabitants seems to connect immediately with *v.* 13.

17, 18 a recur almost verbatim in Jer. xlviii. 43 f. (cf. also Am. v. 19).

18 b—20 describe the physical convulsions which accompany the day of Jehovah.

the windows on high are opened] An allusion to the story of the Deluge (Gen. vii. 11, viii. 2). The rest of the imagery is based on the phenomena of the earthquake.

19. *is clean dissolved*] Better, **is utterly rent.** For *is moved* render **tottereth.**

20. The description of the earthquake culminates in two bold

drunken man, and shall be moved to and fro like a hut; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall [1]punish the host of the [2]high ones on high, and the
22 kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the [3]pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall

[1] Heb. *visit upon.* [2] Heb. *height.* [3] Or, *dungeon*

similes: the reeling of a drunkard, and the swaying of a watchman's shelter.

stagger like a drunken man] Cf. Ps. cvii. 27.

moved to and fro like a hut] The word for "hut" is that used in ch. i. 8 of the watchman's frail shelter in the cucumber-field.

the **rebellion** *thereof shall be heavy upon it*] The material fabric of the earth is as it were crushed beneath the accumulated guilt of its inhabitants (cf. *v.* 5, xxvi. 21).

it shall fall, and not rise again] Apparently a citation from Am. v. 2.

21—23. The judgement on the powers of evil, and the enthronement of Jehovah on Mount Zion.

21. *the host of the high ones on high*] Lit. **the host of the height in the height.** The "host of the height" is equivalent to the "host of heaven" (Jer. xxxiii. 22; 1 Kings xxii. 19; Neh. ix. 6); but (as these passages shew) the expression may be used either of the stars or of the angels. It is impossible to say for certain which sense is intended here, or whether both are combined. That celestial beings of some kind are meant appears clearly from the emphatic contrast with the "kings of the earth" in the second half of the verse. The heavenly bodies, conceived by the ancients as animated, and as influencing the destinies of men, were objects of false worship, and so might be represented as part of the evil system of things which has to be overthrown. On the other hand the idea of patron angels of the various nationalities appears in the later literature (Dan. x. 13, 20, 21, xii. 1; Ecclus. xvii. 17) and these, as mysteriously related to the earthly sovereignties, might also be thought of. (On a similar conception in Ps. lviii., lxxxii., see Cheyne's Bampton Lectures, pp. 120, 337.)

22. *after many days* (of imprisonment) *shall they be visited*] See Jude 6, "reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day" (cf. 2 Pet. ii. 4); and the following passages from the book of Enoch (ch. xviii. 14, 16). "This...place...serves as a prison for the stars of heaven and the host of heaven....And he was wroth with them and bound them unto the time when their guilt should be complete in the year of the secret." (See also Enoch xxi. 6.) These references shew that imprisonment is the fate, not only of rebellious earthly kings, but of the angelic rebels in heaven. It is true that the verb "visited"

they be [1]visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and 23
the sun ashamed: for the LORD of hosts shall reign in
mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and [2]before his [3]ancients
gloriously.

[1] Or, *punished*
[2] Or, *before his ancients* shall be *glory*
[3] Or, *elders*

may bear a favourable sense, and some commentators prefer that sense here. But this is opposed both to the tenor of the passage and the analogy of eschatological representations.

23. *the moon shall be confounded . ashamed*] i.e. shall "pale their ineffectual fires" before the light of Jehovah's presence (see ch. lx. 19). A *punishment* of the sun and moon, as representatives of the "host of heaven," is not to be thought of. The words "moon" and "sun" are poetic, signifying respectively "the white" and "the hot." (Cf. ch. xxx. 26.)

the LORD of hosts shall reign] Lit. "will have become king."

before his ancients gloriously] Render with marg. **before his ancients** (elders) **shall be glory**. There is an allusion to the Theophany seen by the seventy elders of Israel at Mount Sinai, recorded in Ex. xxiv. 9, 10. It is significant that the representatives of the redeemed community who stand nearest to Jehovah are not a king and princes, as in ch. xxxii. 1, nor priests, as in Ezekiel's Temple-vision, but a council of elders.

CH. XXV. SONGS AND PROPHECIES OF REDEMPTION.

The chapter is made up of three distinct sections:—

(1) *vv.* 1—5. A psalm of thanksgiving celebrating the downfall of some heathen city, and a signal deliverance extended to Israel.

(2) *vv.* 6—8. A prophecy of the Messianic dispensation, under the figure of a feast spread for all nations in Mount Zion. These verses are obviously the direct continuation of ch. xxiv.

(3) *vv.* 9—12. Another hymn of praise, composed in prospect of the humiliation of Moab.

The occurrence of lyrical outbursts such as (1) and (3) constitutes one of the critical problems presented by this difficult prophecy. Two views are possible. (*a*) These passages (and others of a similar character) may belong to the original plan of the work, and may have been introduced by the author himself to mark the various stages in the great drama which unfolds itself before his prophetic vision. In this case we must suppose that he assumes an ideal standpoint in the future, from which he expresses the emotions of those who shall look back on the fulfilment of his predictions. Or, (*b*) they may be independent compositions which have been inserted in the text by an editor or scribe. (See the Concluding Note, pp. 216 ff.)

25 O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise
thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, *even*
2 counsels of old, in faithfulness *and* truth. For thou hast
made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace
3 of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. There-
fore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the
4 terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strong
hold to the poor, a strong hold to the needy in his distress,
a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the
5 blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. As

1—5. The writer of the psalm, speaking in the name of the believing community, praises God for His wonderful providence (*v.* 1) manifested in the overthrow of Israel's enemies (2, 3) and in the mercy vouchsafed to the nation in a time of trouble (4, 5).

1. The first half of the verse recalls in every phrase the language of the Psalter. Cf. Ps. lxiii. 1, cxlv. 1, cxxxviii. 2, liv. 6, cxviii. 28.

thou hast done wonderful things] as Ex. xv. 11: Ps. lxxvii. 14, lxxviii. 12. These "wonders" are the execution (in the recent experience of the nation) of *counsels of old*; i.e. purposes long since conceived and revealed. The last clause is perhaps to be translated: (even) **counsels from afar in perfect faithfulness.**

2. The fall of a hostile city. The word "city" can hardly in this case be understood collectively, although the terms of the description are too vague to shew what historic city is intended. All that appears is that it is a city which, in the age of the prophet, symbolised the hostility of the world to the kingdom of God; its identification will depend on the date assigned to the prophecy. If for instance the author lived during or shortly after the Exile, the "defenced city" would be most naturally identified with Babylon (see however on the next verse).

a palace of strangers] Better, **of aliens** (as in ch. i. 7). But the more probable reading is that of the LXX. (זדים for זרים) "the presumptuous."

3. The effect of this judgement on the heathen world. The probable meaning is "many a strong people...many a city, &c." If a single city were meant we should have a *second* representative centre of heathenism, alongside of the "city" of *v.* 2, and the view that Babylon is there referred to could no longer be maintained. It is easier, however, on account of the following plurals (in the Heb. "fear" is pl.), to understand the word here in a collective sense.

4, 5. Its happy consequences for Israel. The "for" may refer back to *v.* 1 or to *v.* 3; in either case the judgement on the oppressive city is regarded as a signal proof of Jehovah's protecting care over His people.

when the blast...wall] Lit., "for the breath of the terrible ones is

the heat in a dry place shalt thou bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shadow of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this 6
mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he 7
will [1]destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all

[1] Heb. *swallow up.*

as rain of a wall." The construction is too condensed to be natural. A better rendering would be "as rain of winter" (reading *kōr* for *kîr*). But the whole clause is justly suspected of being an explanatory gloss on the lines immediately preceding.

5. *As [the] heat in a dry place*, and *as [the] heat* **with** *the shadow of a cloud* are from the hand of the glossator. The remaining clauses of the verse resume and conclude the poem. For *strangers* read again, with LXX. **the presumptuous.**

6 8. This section attaches itself directly to the concluding thought of ch. xxiv. The feast of *v.* 6 may be regarded as a coronation-festival, inaugurating the reign of Jehovah on Mount Zion (xxiv. 23), although of course the state of things which is thus symbolised is not transitory but eternal. What is signified is the admission of all nations to communion with the one true God, and, as a consequence of this, the cessation of all the evils of human life. The whole passage, standing out as it does from a gloomy background of judgement and terror, is one of the most remarkable and fascinating in the Old Testament.

6. *in this mountain*] Mount Zion (cf. xxiv. 23), shewing that the author lived in Jerusalem.

a feast (lit. "banquet") *of fat things...full of marrow*] The fat parts of the animal, which in ordinary sacrifice were reserved for the deity, were regarded in the East as the choicest delicacy. The same image is used in Ps. xxxvi. 8, lxiii. 5 of the highest spiritual enjoyment in fellowship with God.

wines on the lees well refined] i.e. wine that has been left to stand long on its sediment, in order that its strength, flavour, *bouquet*, &c., might be enhanced by repeated fermentation (cf. Jer. xlviii. 11; Zeph. i. 12). Such old wines had to be strained before being used; hence the expression "well-refined" in E.V. The choice of terms in the Heb. is partly dictated by the assonances; *fat things* corresponding to *wines on the lees*, and *full of marrow* to *well refined*. For the image of the feast as an emblem of the blessings of the kingdom of God cf. ch. lv. 1, 2; Ps. xxiii. 5; Matt. viii. 11, xxii. 2 ff.; Luke xiv. 15 ff.; Rev. xix. 9.

7. *the face of the covering...nations*] More literally: **the surface of the veil that veils all the peoples, and the covering that is woven**

8 nations. He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

over all the nations. The phrase "surface of the veil" is peculiar, but a similar expression is found in Job xli. 13. It is probably to be explained as gen. of apposition—"the veil-surface." The veil is not, as might be supposed, a symbol of spiritual blindness (2 Cor. iii. 14 ff.), but of sorrow; the figure being taken from the practice of covering the head in token of mourning (see 2 Sam. xv. 30, xix. 4; Jer. xiv. 3, 4; Esth. vi. 12). The prophet has already spoken of the profound wretchedness in which the world is plunged (ch. xxiv. 7—12).

8. *He hath* **annihilated** *death for ever*] Cf. 2 Tim. i. 10. The A.V. follows the rendering of St Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 54 (κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νῖκος), but "swallow up" is needlessly literal, and "in victory" comes from the apostle's familiarity with Aramaic. The sense, of course, is correctly given. The words contain the clearest expression of the hope of immortality to be found in the prophetic writings. The special contribution of prophecy to that doctrine is reached through the conception of the abolition of death as a hindrance to the perfect blessedness of the Messianic age. Although the prophets rarely touch on this theme, we can see that it was only by degrees and at a late period that the idea of immortal life became an element in their conception of the kingdom of God. The first step towards it was the anticipation of a great extension of human life, as in Zech. viii. 4; Is. lxv. 20, 22. From this to the belief in an absolute annihilation of death is no doubt a great advance, but the advance is made in the passage before us. It might be questioned if the resurrection of those who had fallen asleep before the advent of the Messianic kingdom is here contemplated; but since that doctrine is clearly taught in the next chapter (*v.* 19), the question has little importance.

and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears...]—the traces of past sorrow. "When Jehovah removes the veil he sees the tears and wipes them away" (Duhm). Perhaps no words that ever were uttered have sunk deeper into the aching heart of humanity than this exquisite image of the Divine tenderness; cf. Rev. xxi. 4.

the reproach of his people...earth] a reversal of the doom pronounced in Deut. xxviii. 37. The later Jews keenly felt their accumulated national misfortunes as a religious disgrace, a reflexion on the power of their God; Joel ii. 17; Ps. xliv. 14 ff., lxxix. 10, &c. Comp. with this passage, Zeph. iii. 18 ff.

9—12. The humiliation of Moab. The heading in *v.* 9 marks this as a distinct section. It might indeed be supposed, from the phrase "in this mountain" in *v.* 10, and the use of future tenses in 10—12, that the song of praise ends with *v.* 9 and that 10—12 are the continuation of *v.* 8. But this is unlikely. The express naming of Moab

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we 9
have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD;
we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his
salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD 10
rest, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as
straw is trodden down [1]in the water of the dunghill. And 11
he shall spread forth his hands in the midst [2]thereof, as he
that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands* to swim: [3]and he
shall lay low [4]his pride [5]together with the craft of [4]his
hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls [6]hath 12

[1] Another reading is, *in the dunghill.* [2] Or, *of them*
[3] Or, *but* [4] Or, *their* [5] Or, *for all the craft*
[6] Or, *shall he bring down, lay low, and bring &c.*

is not in the manner of the main apocalyptic prophecy, while to take Moab as a symbolic name for the enemies of God in general is hazardous, as being opposed to Old Testament usage. The violent contrast between the spirit of *vv.* 6—8 and that of *vv.* 10—12 rather favours the supposition that the latter was a separate composition. In any event, we must assume that so passionate an outburst of indignation against Moab was called forth by some special circumstance, although it is not possible to connect it with any known historic occasion.

9. *Lo, this is our God...save us*] Or, **Behold our God on whom we have hoped that he should save us.** So in the next clause: **on whom we have hoped.**

10. The fate of Moab is contrasted with that of Israel. It is as if one hand of Jehovah rested lightly and protectingly on Zion while the other crushes and extinguishes Moab.

in his place] Lit. "under himself," i.e. in the place where he (Moab) stands.

in the water of the dunghill] rightly follows the consonantal text (*Kĕthîl*) in opposition to the Massoretic tradition (*Qĕrê*). But "dung-pit" should be substituted for "dunghill." This word (*madmēnāh*) is perhaps a play on the name Madmen (Jer. xlviii. 2); it also resembles the word for "straw" (*mathbēn*).

11. The figure of Moab trying to swim in the dung-pit is sufficiently graphic, if somewhat repulsive.

in the midst thereof] i.e. of the dung-pit, although there is an *enallage generis.*

and he (Jehovah) *shall lay low his pride*] See on ch. xvi. 6.

together with the craft of his hands] Perhaps: **in spite of the wiles of his hands.** The expression is strange.

12. *the fortress...walls*] Better perhaps, **the towering fortification of thy walls.** This verse has suggested the identification of the city

he brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust.

of xxv. 2, xxvi. 5 f. with a city of Moab. The expressions of the verse are certainly remarkably parallel to those of xxvi. 5, to which Duhm thinks that it was a marginal variant. Other commentators also have surmised that it is misplaced.

hath he brought down, &c.] The perfects here may be those of prophetic certainty.

Ch. XXVI. 1—19. The Nation's Prayer for a more complete Salvation.

(1) *vv.* 1—6. The nation praises God for the strength and safety of Jerusalem, henceforth to be the dwelling place of a righteous, truth-keeping people (1, 2); for the stedfast faith which is now rewarded with peace (3, 4), and for the overthrow of a proud hostile city (5, 6).

(2) *vv.* 7—10. The enthusiasm of the opening verses here gives place to a more subdued and wistful mood. Israel still waits with ardent longing for the accomplishment of Jehovah's judgements (8, 9 *a*), knowing well that only by the discipline of judgement will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (9 *b*, 10).

(3) *vv.* 11—15. Meditation passes into prayer,—first for the destruction of enemies (11), then for peace to Israel (12 *a*); and this again into a retrospect of the past history of the nation, in which the writer thankfully recognises tokens of the divine presence and help (12 *b*). Much has been achieved; foreign tyrants have been swept away (13, 14), the people has been increased and its territory extended (15).

(4) *vv.* 16—18. But the past has its failures also, and the effect of them is felt in the present. Israel has learned prayer through severe discipline (16); yet how vain and ineffectual have all its pain and effort been! (17, 18). And apparently the chief source of disappointment is the scantiness of the population that remains on the eve of the final glory.

(5) *v.* 19. The last verse comes on us almost with a shock of surprise, so far does it seem to exceed the aspiration to which it is the answer. It is a promise of life from the dead in the most literal sense, a resurrection of those members of the community whom death had seemed to rob of their share in the hope of Israel.

It is difficult to interpret the situation which gave rise to this deeply interesting meditation. The nation has emerged from a season of great trouble and oppression, and gratefully acknowledges the mercies it now enjoys, but this feeling is accompanied by confession of failure and an eager longing for a fuller experience of the divine blessing. Such a state of mind is in itself perfectly intelligible; the difficulty is that it is

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: 26
We have a strong city: salvation will he appoint for walls
and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation 2
which keepeth truth may enter in. [1]Thou wilt keep *him* 3
[2]in perfect peace, *whose* [2]mind *is* stayed *on thee*: because he
trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in [4]the 4

[1] Or, *A stedfast mind thou keepest in perfect peace, because it &c.*
[2] Heb. *peace, peace.* [3] Or, *imagination*
[4] Heb. *Jah Jehovah.* See ch. xii. 2.

hardly appropriate to the ideal future standpoint to which the psalm is assigned by the heading. "In that day"—the day of Jehovah's kingdom—the praises of Israel must surely rise higher than the sombre and almost melancholy strains that appear in the latter part of this poem. Yet it seems impossible to regard the passage as other than a unity. The verse-connexion is as a rule very close, and just at those points where some critics have recognised a discontinuity in the thought (e.g. after *v.* 7, or *v.* 10 or *v.* 16) the phraseology presents indications of a studied transition. The poem indeed is remarkable for its *concatenated* structure; that is to say, a word or idea is taken up from one verse and suggests a new thought for the next (*vv.* 2 f., 3 f., 7 f., 8 f., 9 f., 10 f., 17 f.). Partly from this peculiarity it is difficult to trace all the windings of the thought; and clearly defined sections do not exist.

1, 2. These verses might almost have been written for a dedication of the fortifications of Jerusalem. Cf. Ps. xlviii. 12 f.

1. *salvation will he appoint...bulwarks*] Two interpretations are possible: (*a*) "Salvation will He appoint in place of walls and moat" (see below), implying that Jerusalem has no material defences, but only the supernatural protection ("salvation") assured by Jehovah (as Ps. cxxv. 2; Zech. ii. 4, 5). (*b*) "He appoints for salvation (her) walls and moat" (as ch. lx. 18). The choice depends on whether Jerusalem is or is not conceived as a fortified city. Since "gates" are mentioned in the next verse, (*b*) seems more suitable. The word for *bulwarks* (a sing.) is usually understood to mean a low outer wall separated by some space from the wall proper (τεῖχος καὶ περιτείχος in the LXX.); other authorities think it means a ditch or *glacis*.

2. Comp. Ps. cxviii. 19, 20; Rev. xxii. 14. "Truth" here means "troth," fidelity (Deut. xxxii. 20).

3. A stricter rendering might be: **A stedfast disposition thou guardest in constant peace** (lit. "peace, peace"), **for it is trustful towards thee** (see marg.). Cf. Ps. cxii. 7. The word for "disposition" is elsewhere translated "imagination" (e.g. Gen. vi. 5, viii. 21). Literally it means a "thing formed" (as in ch. xxix. 16), and thus may be used tropically either of that which is formed by the mind (imagination) or (as here) of the constitution of the mind itself,—the inclination or character.

5 LORD JEHOVAH is [1]an everlasting rock. For he hath
brought down them that dwell on high, the lofty city: he
layeth it low, he layeth it low even to the ground; he
6 bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down;
7 even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. The
way of the just is [2]uprightness: thou that art upright dost
8 [3]direct the path of the just. Yea, in the way of thy judge-
ments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; to thy name and
9 to thy memorial is the desire of our soul. With my soul

[1] Or, *a rock of ages*
[2] Or, *a right way; the path of the just thou directest aright*
[3] Or, *level*

4. *for in the LORD JEHOVAH is an everlasting rock*] Render: **for Yah Yahveh** (see on xii. 2) **is an everlasting Rock** (lit. "a Rock of Ages"). The preposition *in* may be omitted in English (*Bêth essentiae*).

5, 6. Jehovah has proved himself to be a Rock by the destruction of "the lofty city"; see on ch. xxv. 2. The principal pause in *v.* 5 should be after the word "city."

6. The *poor* and *needy* are the Jews, as in ch. xxv. 4. The oppressed triumph over their oppressors. But that they are actually the instruments of Jehovah's vengeance on the "lofty city" is not necessarily implied.

7, 8. That the way of the righteous is made straight by Jehovah, is a fundamental principle of religion (Prov. iii. 6, xv. 19, &c.), but the principle is upheld only by Jehovah moving in His own way of judgement; therefore the "righteous nation" has waited impatiently for His judicial interposition.

7. The verse should probably be read: **The way of the righteous is straightness: the path of the righteous thou levellest.** This involves the omission of the word behind the very improbable vocative *thou that art upright* of R.V. The "way" of the righteous is here not his inward life-purpose, but his outward lot. *dost direct*] lit. "levellest"; as in Prov. iv. 26, v. 6, 21 (R.V.).

8. *Yea, in the way...for thee*] i.e. have stood by the way along which we expected and desired Jehovah to appear—in judgement. Omitting a suffix we may render: **we have waited for thy name; and for thy memorial is,** &c. "Name" and "memorial" are synonymous, as in Ex. iii. 15; Ps. cxxxv. 13; Jehovah's memorial is that by which He makes Himself to be remembered (see *v.* 13).

desire of our soul] So LXX.; the Heb. simply "desire of soul," which might mean "heartfelt desire"; but the reading is inferior to LXX.

have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within
me will I seek thee [1]early: for when thy judgements are in
the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.
Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn 10
righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal
wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.
LORD, thy hand is lifted up, yet they see not: but they 11
shall see [2]*thy* zeal for the people, and be ashamed; yea,
[3]fire shall devour thine adversaries. LORD, thou wilt ordain 12
peace for us: for thou hast also wrought all our works for

[1] Or, *diligently*
[2] Or, *and be ashamed, in* their *envy at the people*
[3] Or, *the fire of thine adversaries shall devour them*

9. The first half of the verse completes the thought of *v.* 8; the second is linked to *v.* 10. The speaker is the individualised community.

will I seek thee early] Rather, **I seek thee earnestly**.

9 b, 10. The motive of this eager longing for judgement is the conviction that only by this method can the world be brought to the practice of righteousness.

10. *the wicked* probably includes both the heathen and the apostate Israelite.

the land of uprightness is the Holy Land; even there, surrounded by the institutions of a pure religion, the wicked outrages the dictates of morality, having no eyes for the majesty of Jehovah.

11. To the eye of faith the lifting up of Jehovah's hand has been manifest in the recent history of Israel, but, as in Isaiah's time, there are some who "regard not the work of the Lord nor see the operation of his hands" (ch. v. 12); and for them further judgements are necessary.

they shall see...adversaries] A difficult passage. The Heb. reads naturally at the beginning **they shall see and be ashamed**; and at the end (deleting the suff. with LXX.) **yea, a fire shall devour thine adversaries** (as R.V.). The difficulty lies in the phrase "jealousy of (the) people," which in the original stands between the two parts just translated. It might mean (*a*) Jehovah's jealousy for His people, or (*b*) ardour of the people (against enemies), or (*c*) envy of the people (felt by enemies); but in none of these senses can it be naturally construed either with what precedes or with what follows. But for metrical consideration, and a different reading in LXX., the words might pass for a gloss on the "fire" of the last clause.

12. *thou wilt ordain peace* (**welfare**) *for us*] cf. *v.* 3.

for thou hast also wrought...] Better: **for even our whole work thou hast wrought for us**; all that we have achieved—inadequate though it be (see *v.* 17)—has been due to Thy working for us. A similar thought underlies the prayer of Ps. xc. 16, 17, where the manifestation

13 us. O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had
dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention
14 of thy name. [1] *They are* dead, they shall not live; *they are*
[2]deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited
and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.
15 Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased

[1] Or, *The dead live not, the deceased rise not*
[2] Or, *shades* Heb. *Rephaim.*

of Jehovah's work is equivalent to His establishing the work of Israel's hands.

13. 14. The long heathen dominion is now a thing of the past: the oppressors have gone to the realm of shades, and shall trouble the world no more.

13. *other lords beside thee*] That the reference is to foreign despotisms, and not as some have thought to false gods, may be regarded as certain. The rule of the heathen over the people of God was an invasion of Jehovah's sovereignty, it was inconsistent with the ideal of the Theocracy, and hindered the perfect realisation of the divine will in the national life.

have had dominion over us] **have owned us.**

by thee only...name] The sense appears to be: "it is through Thy help alone that we can now celebrate Thy name." The construction is not very clear.

14. Render: **The dead shall not live, the Shades** (*Rĕphā'îm*, as in xiv. 9) **shall not rise**, &c. In the form of a general proposition the writer expresses Israel's sense of security with regard to those "other lords" who have now vanished from the earth. The idea is probably suggested by ch. xiv. 9 ff. There is no contradiction between this verse and *v.* 19, nor is there any evidence of a merely nascent belief in the possibility of a resurrection; because the subjects in the two verses are different. The resurrection of *v.* 19 is distinctly represented as miraculous, and is limited to members of the covenant people; over those who are unvisited by the life-giving "dew" of Jehovah, the sway of death is absolute.

therefore...] i.e. in token that they shall never reappear, all traces of their supremacy have been obliterated.

all their memory] **every memorial of them.**

15. *Thou hast increased the nation*] Probably an allusion to ch. ix. 3. There seems no justification for taking the perfects here as prophetic perfects (but see Gray, p. 444), or for understanding them in a precative sense. A real increase of the nation and its territory is regarded as already effected; this is one of the successes which Jehovah has wrought for His people.

the nation: thou art glorified: [1]thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land.

LORD, in trouble have they [2]visited thee, they poured out 16
a [3]prayer *when* thy chastening was upon them. Like as a 17
woman with child, that draweth near the time of her
delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so have
we been [4]before thee, O LORD. We have been with child, 18
we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth

[1] Or, *thou hadst removed* it *far* unto *all the ends of the earth*
[2] Or, *looked for* [3] Heb. *whisper.*
[4] Or, *at thy presence*

thou art glorified] **thou hast glorified thyself**, by thus exalting Israel.

16-18. The poet plunges abruptly into a train of reflexion on the depressing side of the nation's experience.

16. *in trouble* ("distress" or "straits," as ch. xxv. 4) *have they visited thee*] i.e. sought after thee. The verb might also mean "missed thee"—felt their need of thee. This was no doubt a spiritual gain, but the author's complaint is that so little outward benefit has accrued from the nation's discipline of sorrow.

they poured out...upon them. A very obscure clause. The rendering of R.V. is perhaps the best that can be made of the received text, but it cannot be defended. The root-meaning of the word for "prayer" is "whisper," but in usage it is confined to the sense of "enchantment." It is questionable if it could mean "whispered prayer," although the cognate verb in 2 Sam. xii. 19 and Ps. xli. 7 might be appealed to in support of this view. Moreover, the verbal form "they poured out" is anomalous, and the syntax of "when thy chastisement was upon them" is at least hard. Both words are corrupt, and a comparatively simple change is to read (nearly as Cheyne) צעקנו לחין instead of צקון לחש: "we cried out of oppression" (for the syntax see Job xix. 7). Observe that this requires us to read the 1st per. plu. throughout the verse as in LXX., which is in itself an improvement.

17. The agony of the crisis is compared to the pangs of a woman in travail,—a common figure, Hos. xiii. 13; Mic. iv. 10, &c.

before thee] Or, **because of thee**—Thy chastening hand.

18. Retaining the figure the prophet dwells on the abortive issue of the nation's prayers and sufferings. In the last clause he seems even to give the figure a closer application. For that sentence is no doubt to be read as in marg., **neither have inhabitants of the world been born**; i.e. the mother-nation has brought forth no children to people the world. This sense of the verb "fall" is not found elsewhere in Heb., but it occurs in Arabic (cf. also the Greek πίπτειν and Latin *cadere*); and here it is demanded by the last clause of *v.* 19. The complaint (of

wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth;
19 [1]neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Thy dead
shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye
that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is *as* the dew of [2]herbs,
and the earth shall cast forth [3]the dead.

[1] Or, *neither have inhabitants of the world been born*
[2] Or, *light* [3] Or, *the shades* Heb. *Rephaim.*

an insufficient population) seems at first inconsistent with *v.* 15, but the discrepancy belongs to the conflict of feeling which runs through the poem; a certain degree of prosperity has been attained, but not complete and final salvation. It is certainly difficult to imagine such a complaint projected on the ideal horizon of the future. A disappointment so peculiar must be begotten of actual experience. Comp. ch. lxvi. 7—9.

we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth] Lit. "we do not make the land salvations"; i.e. we cannot with all our exertions bring about a condition of freedom, prosperity, peace, &c.

19. The answer to these utterances of disappointed hopes is the promise of the Resurrection. The speaker throughout is the community, and the words are addressed to God. There is indeed no decisive argument against the view of those who think that the first half of the verse expresses the longing of the nation for the restoration of its dead ("May thy dead live, &c."), and the second the triumphant assurance of the prophet that the prayer shall be fulfilled. But it is more probable that the language throughout is that of confident belief and hope.

Thy dead shall live] Those who died in the faith and fear of God.

my dead bodies] It is almost necessary to read "their" for "my."

Awake and sing, ye...] By changing the vowel points we may render: "They awake and sing who dwell in the dust."

for thy dew is as *the dew of herbs*] Better, **for a dew of lights is thy dew** (O Jehovah). Comp. James i. 17. The word means "herbs" in 2 Ki. iv. 39, but the idea is too prosaic for this passage. It is a heavenly, supernatural, dew that is meant; as soon as this falls on the dead they awake to life. Duhm refers to a Talmudic representation of a dew kept in the seventh heaven which is to descend on the bones of the dead and quicken them into life. "Light" and "life" are frequently and naturally associated: Ps. xxxvi. 9, lvi. 13; Job iii. 20, xxxiii. 30; John i. 4.

the earth shall cast forth the dead] Render: **the earth** (or **the land**) **shall bring shades to birth** (*v.* 14). The verb is lit. "cause to fall," but obviously in the sense explained under *v.* 18.

The doctrine of the resurrection here presented is reached through the conviction, gradually produced by the long process of revelation, that the final redemption of Israel could not be accomplished within the limits of nature. It became clear that the hopes and aspirations

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut 20
thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until
the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh 21
forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth
for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood,
and shall no more cover her slain.

engendered by the Spirit in believing minds pointed forward to the great miracle here described, and thus the belief in the resurrection was firmly bound up with the indestructible hopes of the future of Israel (cf. Rom. xi. 15). The idea is exhibited in a form which is immature in the light of New Testament teaching, but it practically represents the highest development of Old Testament revelation on this subject. The only passage which is slightly in advance of this is Dan. xii. 2, and even there a universal resurrection is not taught. Here the hope is restricted to Israelites (see *v.* 14) and no doubt to those Israelites who had departed this life in the faith and fear of God. On the other hand, the teaching of this verse is quite different from such passages as Hos. vi. 2; Ez. xxxvii. 1–14. There rising from the dead is but a figurative clothing of the idea of national regeneration, whereas there can be no doubt that here a literal resurrection of individuals is foretold.

CH. XXVI. 20—XXVII. 13. THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROPHECY.

V. 20 resumes the connexion of the prophetic discourse, interrupted since xxv. 8; this is again broken by a lyrical passage, xxvii. 2–6, and by *vv.* 7—11; and concludes with *vv.* 12, 13. The contents are of a somewhat mixed character, and the divisions are clearly marked.

(1) xxvi. *vv.* 20, 21. A call to the people of God to hide themselves till the indignation be overpast.

(2) xxvii. *v.* 1. Announcement of judgement on the great World-powers.

(3) *vv.* 2–6.—A song of Jehovah concerning His vineyard.

(4) *vv.* 7–11. The moderation displayed in Jehovah's chastisement of Israel, and the lesson to be learned from it.

(5) *vv.* 12, 13. A prophecy of the restoration of the dispersed of Israel.

20, 21. The storm of judgement is about to burst on the world, but it will be of short duration: let the people seclude themselves in the privacy of their chambers and wait for a glorious salvation (cf. Zeph. ii. 3; Dan. xii. 13).

20. *enter...and shut thy doors about thee*] Matt. vi. 6. There is nothing, however, to suggest that the words here are a summons to secret prayer. *until the indignation be overpast*] Job xiv. 13; Dan. xi. 36.

21. *the LORD* **is coming forth** (fut. instans) *out of his place*] i.e. heaven. Cf. Mic. i. 3.

the earth also...blood] The "also" is too emphatic; read simply

27 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the [1]swift serpent, and leviathan the [2]crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

[1] Or, *gliding* Or, *fleeing* [2] Or, *winding*

"and the earth." Uncovered blood cries for vengeance (Gen. iv. 11; Ez. xxiv. 7, 8); and the earth, by drinking in innocent blood, seems to conspire with the murderer, by concealing his guilt. Comp. Job's impassioned cry in xvi. 18.

shall no more cover her slain] The idea here is the same: the earth will expose the dead bodies as evidence against the persecutors. It is unlikely that there is any thought of actual resurrection.

1. The judgement on the powers of evil (cf. xxiv. 21) is represented symbolically as the destruction of three living monsters by the sword of Jehovah. It is disputed whether the reference is to the world-power in general, or to a single Empire, or to three separate Empires. Assuming that they are distinct, the "Dragon that is in the sea" is almost certainly an emblem of Egypt (ch. li. 9; Ez. xxix. 3, xxxii. 2; Ps. lxxiv. 13). To the reference of the other two we have no key. It is of the essence of apocalyptic symbolism to be obscure; and it will always be possible, at any date, to find representatives, more or less suitable, of the three creatures. If the prophet wrote during or soon after the Exile they might denote Assyria and Babylonia; if at a later period, perhaps Babylonia and Persia, or even Persia and Greece.

A purely astronomical interpretation is advocated by Burney (*Journ. of Theol. St.*, 1910), who very plausibly identifies the three monsters with the three serpentine constellations in the heavens: *Serpens*, *Draco*, and *Hydra*. But though this gives a probable *origin* of the representation, it does not seem to exclude the possibility that to the mind of the Jewish writer they symbolised three political entities.

For the *sword* of Jehovah cf. ch. xxxiv. 5, 6, lxvi. 16; Deut. xxxii. 41 f.; Ezek. xxi. 4, 5, 9 ff., &c. For *sore* render **hard**.

leviathan] The word apparently means "twisted," and is originally an epithet for the serpent. Although applied (probably) in Job xli. to the crocodile, it is no doubt mythological in its origin, denoting (like our "dragon") a fabulous monster figuring largely in popular legends. It is so used in Job iii. 8 and perhaps Ps. civ. 26; as a political symbol in Ps. lxxiv. 14 and here.

the swift serpent] **the fugitive serpent.** The phrase occurs in Job xxvi. 13, where we have the wide-spread myth of the dragon that devours the sun (in eclipses, &c.). See Dr Davidson's *Job*, *ad loc.* How this astronomical dragon came to be specially connected with any political power we cannot tell; but we find an analogous case in the word Rahab as a symbol for Egypt (see on ch. xxx. 7).

leviathan the crooked serpent] Render: **and Leviathan the tortuous serpent.**

In that day: [1]A vineyard of wine, sing ye [2]unto it. I the 2, 3
LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any
hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me: 4
would that the briers and thorns were against me in battle!
I would march upon them, I would burn them together.

[1] Or, according to some ancient authorities, *A pleasant vineyard*
[2] Or, *of*

the dragon that is in the sea] The *sea* may mean here the Nile, as often: see on xix. 5.

2—6. The song of the vineyard,—the counterpart of ch. v. 1 ff. This peculiar and perplexing passage has little relation to the context. It seems to fall into two stanzas; the first (*vv.* 2—4 *a*) expresses Jehovah's satisfaction in his vineyard (the Theocratic nation), the second (*vv.* 4 *b*—5, which however is obscure) states what He would do if it should again be injured by wicked men.

2. The verse probably runs thus:

In that day—
Pleasant vineyard!
Sing ye of it.

The introductory formula (cf. ch. xxv. 9, xxvi. 1) is here curtailed to the bare note of time, "In that day"; the song itself begins with the words "Pleasant vineyard." This is preferable to making the last expression a part of the introduction.

A vineyard of wine] The reading here (*kerem hemer*) is that of the majority of MSS. But a few MSS. (and indeed the common printed editions), as well as the LXX. and Targ., have *kerem hemed* ("pleasant vineyard"), and this as yielding the best sense is generally adopted by commentators. For the phrase see Am. v. 11.

3. *do keep it*] Better: **am its keeper.** For *I will water...I will keep*, substitute **I water...I keep.**

lest any hurt it] The Hebrew may mean (pointing the verb as *Niph.*) **lest its leaves be missing** (see Gray).

4. *Fury is not in me*] Or, **Wrath have I none.** These words naturally go with the first stanza, expressing, as they seem to do, Jehovah's contentment with the condition of His vineyard.

would that...battle] The phrase "Who will give?" is the well-known Hebrew equivalent of the Latin *utinam*, "O that!" Omitting a Hebrew consonant, Duhm reads for *in battle*, "in a salt land" (במלחה. Jer. xvii. 6), which would get rid of the uncouth figure of a battle between Jehovah and the thistles. But the idea is hardly consistent with the strong optative introduction of the verse.

briers and thorns] (ch. v. 6) must here mean heathen intruders.

I would march upon them] Better perhaps **I would trample on them**, though the verb does not occur elsewhere in O.T. For the idea comp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 6 f.

5 Or else let him take hold of my strength, that he may make
6 peace with me; *yea*, let him make peace with me. [1]In
days to come shall Jacob take root; Israel shall blossom
and bud: and they shall fill the face of the world with
fruit.
7 Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him?
or is he slain according to the slaughter [2]of them that were
8 slain by him? [3]In measure, [4]when thou sendest her away,
thou dost contend with her; he hath removed *her* with his

[1] Or, *In the generations that come* [2] Or, *of their slain*
[3] The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.
[4] Or, *by sending her away*

5. *Or else let him take hold of my strength*] lit. "my stronghold" or asylum: cf. 1 Kings i. 50, ii. 28. The figure is relinquished; the idea expressed being that unconditional surrender to Jehovah on the part of the ungodly is the only alternative to his annihilation.

The two last clauses differ only in the order of words, and should be translated alike.

6. *In days to come*] By a unique ellipsis the word "days" is omitted in the original; hence the rendering of A.V., "them that come."

Jacob... Israel] At the end of the poem, just as in v. 7, the vineyard is expressly identified with Jehovah's people.

7—11. The lesson of Jehovah's treatment of Israel. Has Israel suffered the extremity of Divine punishment as its oppressors have done (7)? There is a ground of hope in the moderation displayed by Jehovah in His chastisement of Israel (8); the prospect of ultimate reconciliation is held out; and this hope will be realised when all the monuments of idolatry are erased from the land (9). At present the city lies desolate, a witness to the sinful blindness of the people and the estrangement of its Creator (10, 11). The section is full of difficulties. The words of *v.* 8 stand in no obvious relation to the context, and are probably to be regarded (with Duhm) as a marginal gloss to *v.* 10. The connexion between *v.* 9 and *v.* 10 is also obscure.

7. For the thought cf. Jer. x. 24, 25. The interrogations imply, of course, a negative answer; Jehovah has *not* smitten Israel as He has those that smote it. In the second question the reading of LXX. and Peshito is to be preferred on account of the parallelism: **hath he been slain according to the slaughter of those that slew him** (Israel)?

8. A very difficult verse. The first word in the Heb. is supposed to be a contracted reduplication of *sĕāh* (the third part of an ephah); hence "by seah and seah" = "in exact measure," "dealing out punishment in carefully adjusted quantities" (Cheyne and Kay). But this cannot be right. A better, though very precarious, sense is reached by

rough blast in the day of the east wind. Therefore by this 9
shall the iniquity of Jacob be [1]purged, and this is all the
fruit [2]of taking away his sin; when he maketh all the stones
of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, *so that*
the Asherim and the sun-images shall rise no more. For 10
the defenced city is solitary, an habitation deserted and
forsaken, like the wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and
there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.
When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken 11
off; the women shall come, and set them on fire: for it is
a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them
will not have compassion upon them, and he that formed
them will shew them no favour.

[1] Or, *expiated* [2] Or, *to take away*

the help of a word (*sa'sa'a*) which the Arabs use in driving animals. The first half of the verse would thus read: **By driving her forth, by sending her away, thou contendest with her.** If the verse be a citation to *v.* 10, the fem. pronouns refer to the city (Jerusalem) there described.

9. The condition of restoration and forgiveness. *Therefore* points back to the idea of *v.* 7—the moderation of Israel's punishment, while *by this* (i.e. "on this condition") points forward to the end of the verse, the removal of idolatrous emblems.

be purged] **be expiated** (marg.).

and this is all...sin] The act of penitence about to be indicated is at once the condition and the result ("fruit") of Israel's forgiveness.

when he maketh all the stones of the altar] Rather, **that he should make all altar-stones**, &c.

the Asherim and the sun-images] See on xvii. 8.

shall rise no more] i.e. **shall not remain standing.**

10, 11. A picture of the desolation of Jerusalem, and the explanation of it. The commoner view is that the same hostile city as in xxv. 2, xxvi. 5 is referred to, but the latter part of *v.* 11 must refer to Israel. A partial parallel is found in ch. xlii. 19 ff.

10. *the calf...consume the branches thereof*] Not a very likely image! Duhm, by an emendation, reads: **the calf grazes, and thorns and briers send forth branches.**

11. *women...fire*] i.e. come thither to gather fuel.

a people of no understanding] (lit. "not a people of discernment") because it does not perceive that deliverance is delayed solely by its continued impenitence (ch. xliv. 18).

12, 13. The return from Exile,—a prophecy of the same character as ch. xi. 11—16. The verses continue *v.* 1, and form the conclusion of the main prophecy of xxiv.—xxvii.

12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall [1]beat off *his fruit*, from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt, and ye shall be [2]gathered [3]one by one, O ye children of Israel.

13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come which were [4]ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

[1] Or, *beat out* his corn
[2] Or, *gleaned*
[3] Or, *one to another*
[4] Or, *lost*

12. *the LORD shall beat off...Egypt*] Rather: **Jehovah shall beat out** (corn) **from the corn-ears of the River** (the Euphrates) **unto** (**those of**) **the brook of Egypt**, i.e. all that grows between those limits. The term "beat out" is applied both to the beating of olives from the tree (Deut. xxiv. 20) and to the beating out of grain with a staff—a more careful process than the ordinary methods (xxviii. 27; Jud. vi. 11). The latter analogy gives the best sense here. The "brook of Egypt" is the *Wadi el Arish*, the south-western frontier of Palestine, this and the Euphrates being the extreme boundaries of the ideal territory of Israel (Gen. xv. 18, &c.). The meaning is that within this territory Jehovah will carefully separate the corn from the chaff and straw,—the true Israelites from heathens and apostates. *V.* 13 then describes, under another figure, the ingathering of those who were exiled beyond these limits.

13. *a great trumpet*] Cf. ch. xviii. 3; Zech. ix. 14; Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16.

they...which were ready to perish] **the lost ones.**

outcasts] Cf. ch. xi. 12.

CONCLUDING NOTE ON CH. XXIV.—XXVII.

The above exposition has left some general questions in suspense; and for the most part they are such as cannot be adequately discussed in this commentary. There are two, however, on which a few additional observations may be made, viz., (1) the unity and (2) the date, of the prophecy.

(1) The question of *unity*, as first raised by the criticisms of Duhm and Cheyne, relates principally to the lyrical passages already marked off in the notes (xxv. 1—5, 9—12, xxvi. 1—19, xxvii. 2—6), although it is acknowledged that the section xxvii. 7—11 presents difficulties quite as great. As has been hinted above, the commonly accepted view has been that the lyrics represent flights of the author's imagination, depicting the feelings of the redeemed community after the great

judgement is past. The chief considerations urged against this view are as follows. (*a*) If we read consecutively xxiv., xxv. 6–8, xxvi. 20–xxvii. 1, 12, 13, we have a series of conceptions which readily fit into a consistent picture of the future, and (at least up to xxvii. 1) a very natural sequence of thought. (*b*) The songs are distinguished from the main prophecy in poetic structure and rhythm, as well as in the point of view they represent. (*c*) They do not occur at places where their insertion would be natural if due to the literary plan of the composition, while one of them (xxv. 1–5) appears to interrupt a close connexion of thought. (*d*) The most important of all (xxvi. 1–19) is written in a vein of mingled exultation and despondency inappropriate to the supposed situation. Although the reader is naturally averse to entertaining the idea of interpolation if it can possibly be avoided, it can hardly be denied that these arguments have a considerable cumulative force. (*b*) counts for little or nothing by itself, while the others may involve merely subjective differences of critical judgement. The crucial case is probably (*d*), where the "ideal standpoint" theory could only be maintained by assuming that the writer's imagination lacks the strength of wing needful to bear him triumphantly away from the discouraging outlook of his actual present.

(2) The question of the *date* of the prophecy is of course influenced by the view held as to its unity, although to a less extent than might be imagined, since critics generally agree in regarding the whole series of compositions as belonging to the literature of a single period. Duhm assigns them to the reign of John Hyrcanus, and finds allusions to the Parthian campaign of Antiochus Sidetes (B.C. 129) and the destruction of Samaria (*c.* 107). But there is really nothing to warrant these precise determinations, and the theory is negatived by well-established conclusions as to the close of the O.T. Canon. Cheyne's view is free from this objection and is in itself very attractive. The historical background of the prophecy is found in the events which preceded the dissolution of the Persian Empire (say 350–330). The gloomy survey of ch. xxiv. is explained by the "desolating and protracted wars" of the period, in which the Jews are known to have suffered severely and during which Jerusalem was not improbably laid waste by Persian armies. The premature songs of triumph referred to in ch. xxiv. 16 are supposed to have been called forth by rumours of the expedition of Alexander the Great, whilst the interspersed lyrical passages celebrate the Jewish deliverance achieved by the Macedonian victories. Perhaps the least convincing part of the hypothesis is the identification of the conquered city of xxv. 2, xxvi. 5, with Tyre or Gaza, destroyed by Alexander; but in spite of that Cheyne's view is probably the one which best harmonises the varied indications of the prophecy (see his *Introduction*, pp. 155 ff., and the refs. there).

Of rival theories there is perhaps but one that deserves careful examination, that, viz., which seeks the occasion of the prophecy in the age immediately succeeding the Exile, particularly the Babylonian troubles under Darius Hystaspis. There is, indeed, a surprising number of

coincidences between the phenomena of this prophecy and the circumstances of that time or the contemporary literature. The expectation of a great overturning of existing political conditions occurs in the writings of Haggai (ii. 6, 7, 21—23) and Zechariah (i. 11 ff.); the idea of a world-judgement in Isa. xiii. 6 ff.; the universalism of xxv. 6—8 finds nowhere a more sympathetic response than in Isa. xl.—lv.; and even the "songs of the righteous" (xxiv. 16) have a certain resemblance to xlv. 10. The allusion to recent idolatry in xxvii. 9 is amply accounted for; and the "city" (although too much has been made of this point) of xxiv. 10 ff., xxvii. 10 f., xxv. 2, xxvi. 5 might be Babylon, the "world-city," now humbled and soon to be utterly destroyed.

The ultimate decision probably turns on certain general features of the prophecy, which are thought to point to a very late age. These are (*a*) its apocalyptic colouring and imagery (see, however, the *caveat* on p. 192 above), (*b*) the advanced form in which it presents the doctrines of immortality (xxv. 8) and the resurrection (xxvi. 19); and (possibly) (*c*) the belief in tutelary genii of the nations. With regard to these phenomena many will agree with Cheyne that they "become the more intelligible the later we place this composition in the Persian period."

Chapters XXVIII.—XXXIII.

A collection of prophecies, mostly Isaianic, arranged artificially in six groups, each headed by the catchword *Hôi* ("Woe") (xxviii. 1, xxix. 1, 15, xxx. 1, xxxi. 1, xxxiii. 1). It is unfortunate that this fact affords no clue to the real structure of the section: there is no unity in the several divisions; and the arrangement as a whole is somewhat promiscuous as well as artificial. Nevertheless the discourses do appear in the main (so far as genuine) to reflect the activity of Isaiah during a single period of his career—the years immediately preceding Sennacherib's invasion; and it is possible that the *nucleus* of the collection was a volume of discourses issued by the prophet at some juncture in that critical time (see xxx. 8 ff.). But there are some things that throw doubt on this hypothesis of the origin of the group. (1) The collection contains certain passages whose non-Isaianic authorship is generally recognised (xxix. 16–24, xxx. 18—26, xxxiii.), as well as others which can only be assigned to Isaiah with some hesitation (xxx. 27—33, xxxii. 6–8, 15–20). (2) It is difficult to explain the inclusion of the "Woe" against Samaria (xxviii. 1—4), which must have been uttered before 722, and of xxxii. 9–14, which must date from the earliest period of Isaiah's ministry. The difficulty as to xxviii. 1—4 might be got over by supposing that this oracle was republished in the reign of Sennacherib as a warning to the dissolute nobility of Jerusalem; but this explanation will not apply to xxxii. 9—14. (3) It is not certain, though it may be probable, that the denunciations of the Egyptian alliance (xxviii. 15, xxix. 15, xxx. 1—5, 6 f., xxxi. 1—3), which run like a thread through the prophecies, refer to the negotiations that culminated in the revolt under Sennacherib (see Introd. p. xxxv).

(4) The miscellaneous character of the arrangement is not such as we should expect in a volume edited by Isaiah himself. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, the most reasonable view may be that the chapters consist of a series of "Woes" compiled at a time much later than Isaiah's, and that it is partly by accident that they happen to preserve so large a proportion of prophecies bearing on Sennacherib's invasion.

Ch. XXVIII. Isaiah's encounters with the Dissolute Nobles of Jerusalem.

The chapter contains four separate discourses :—

i. *vv.* 1–6. A denunciation of the "drunkards of Ephraim," with an announcement of the speedy fall of their beautiful city (1—4); ending with a brief glance at the Messianic age beyond the judgement (5, 6). That the first four verses are a real prediction and were therefore uttered before 721 is not open to question; but how long before, we have no means of determining. The absence of any reference to Damascus makes it *probable* that the date is either before 735 (when the alliance was formed) or after 732 (when Damascus fell). Between these two periods it is absolutely impossible to decide.

ii. *vv.* 7–13. For, continues the prophet, the dissipation for which the northern capital was once notorious is now a startling symptom of the state of society in Jerusalem (7, 8). The policy of rebellion has been hatched by a clique of drunkards. What follows (9—13) evidently reproduces a remarkable dialogue between Isaiah and the leaders of the anti Assyrian party at one of their disgraceful orgies. The prophet has forced his way into the banquet-chamber; the unmasked debauchees turn on him with insolent raillery, and express in mocking tones their impatience of the irksome monotony of his teaching (9, 10); but Isaiah throws back their insulting language in their teeth, telling them of a day when Jehovah will speak to them in a far more grievous language, which they cannot fail to understand (11—13).

iii. *vv.* 14–22. A warning against the scornful irreligious temper displayed by the politicians who had gained the upper hand in the court. With fatuous self-confidence they spoke of their secret spells as a covenant with Death and Hell, i.e. as one that secured perfect immunity from every conceivable kind of danger or evil (14, 15). The prophet declares that in the storm of judgement which is fast approaching, every false refuge will be swept away, and those alone will escape who put their trust in Jehovah's immutable purpose of salvation towards Zion (16—22).

iv. *vv.* 23–29. A justification of God's providential dealings with Israel, based on the analogy of the varied operations of agriculture. The wisdom of the husbandman is a reflexion of the Infinite Wisdom which governs the world; consistency of aim with diversity of method is the characteristic of both. As the farmer varies his activity from season to season, and modifies his treatment in accordance with the

28 Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim,
and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on
the head of the fat valley of them that are [1]overcome with
2 wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as
a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty
waters overflowing, shall he cast down to the earth [2]with the
3 hand. The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim

[1] Heb. *smitten down.* [2] Or, *with violence*

nature of his crops, so in the divine discipline of humanity there is the same wise adaptation of means to ends, and the same patient pursuit of a single beneficial aim through the mingled "goodness and severity" of God.

1—4. The fate of the drunkards of Ephraim. On the luxury and debauchery of Samaria, see Am. iii. 12, 15, iv. 1, vi. 1, 6.

1. In a single image of great beauty the prophet describes the picturesque situation of the city, the tone of its society, and its ripeness for judgement. Samaria, with its ramparts and white terraced streets crowning the summit of a low hill, which rises in the middle of a fertile valley (1 Ki. xvi. 24), is compared to the chaplet of flowers that wreathes the flushed temples of a reveller (cf. Wisd. Sol. ii. 7. 8). But the long carousal is nearly over, the wreath is already faded and soon (*v.* 3) will be dashed to the ground. The verse may be read:

Woe the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,
And the fading flower of his glorious beauty,
(Which is) **On the fertile vale of the victims of wine!**

overcome (lit. "struck down") *with wine*] (οἰνοπλῆγες) the last stage of intoxication. Hard drinking is compared to a combat between the toper and his drink, in which the latter is victorious, ch. xvi. 8.

2. The reason for the woe of *v.* 1. Render: **Behold a mighty and strong one Jehovah! Like a tempest of hail, a destroying storm; Like a rush of waters mighty, overflowing, Casting down to the earth with force.**

a mighty and strong one] i.e. the Assyrian, Jehovah's instrument (ch. x. 5). The vagueness of the allusion points on the whole to an early date for the prophecy.

a destroying storm] Delitzsch renders less suitably "a pestilential wind." The word occurs again only in Deut. xxxii. 24; Ps. xci. 6; and a closely related one in Hos. xiii. 14 (R.V. "destruction"): in all three cases with the sense of "pestilence." But the idea here seems to be more general ("destruction"). The image of the storm, here presented in three forms, recurs in *vv.* 15, 18 f.

shall he cast] Better, **casts** (perf. of experience, Davidson, *Synt.* § 40, *e*). The subj. is the storm of waters.

with the hand] i.e. **with violence.**

shall be trodden under foot: and the fading flower of his 4
glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall
be as the firstripe fig before the summer; which when he
that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he
eateth it up. In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a 5
crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue

3, 4 a. The verb *shall be trodden* is in the plural number (fem.). Apparently the subject includes both the images of the proud crown (*v.* 3) and the fading flower (*v.* 4 *a*). The word והיתה should be transferred from the beginning of the verse to the beginning of 4 *b*, where it marks the introduction of a new figure. In Heb. the order is: **With the feet shall be trodden down The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim. And the fading flower of his glorious beauty, Which is at the head of the fat valley** (as *v.* 1). Whether we should complete the sentence as in *v.* 1 is uncertain.

4 b. Render: **And it** (i.e. Samaria) **shall be like the early fig before the fruit-harvest**, &c. These "early figs," which might be found in the end of June, many weeks before the proper fig-season (in October), are often twice as large as the "late figs," and on account of their sweetness are esteemed a great delicacy; Hos. ix. 10; Mic. vii. 1; Nah. iii. 12; Jer. xxiv. 2 (cf. Mark xi. 13).

which when he . seeth] Render: **which when any one seeth** (lit. "(the seer) seeth"; indef. subj., Davidson, *Synt.* § 108, R. 1). To see, to snatch, to swallow, is the work of a moment. So greedily and hastily and easily shall the Assyrians devour Samaria! But the plucking of the fig did not prove so easy! It took the Assyrians three years to break the resistance of these drunken revellers.

5, 6. Jehovah Himself the true glory of His people; a Messianic pendant to the foregoing picture of Samaria's fall, *possibly* of later origin. The phrase *in that day* points as usual to the indefinite future of the Messianic age, not to the day of judgement on North Israel. Whether the "remnant of His people" denotes the survivors of the Northern tribes, or those of Judah, or of the whole nation, it means a converted remnant; and there is no reason to suppose that Isaiah at any time expected the conversion of Judah to follow immediately the destruction of Ephraim. The writer is here looking beyond the whole series of national judgements, and the insertion of the promise is evidently suggested by the contrast between the false glory that has vanished and the true glory which shall endure.

5. *a crown of glory*] no longer a "crown of pride," as *vv.* 1, 3.

diadem of beauty] The word *ṣĕphîrāh* (diadem) occurs again only in Ezek. vii. 7, 10 (where, however, the sense is disputed). It probably denotes a "ring" or coronet.

the residue (**remnant**) *of his people*] The exact phrase is not found elsewhere.

6 of his people: and for a spirit of judgement to him
that sitteth in judgement, and for strength to them that turn
7 back the battle [1]at the gate. But these also [2]have erred
through wine, and through strong drink [3]are gone astray;
the priest and the prophet [2]have erred through strong drink,
they are swallowed up of wine, they are gone astray through
strong drink; they [2]err in vision, they stumble in judge-

[1] Or, *to* [2] Or, *reel* [3] Or, *stagger*

6. Jehovah is not only the beauty of the redeemed nation, but the source of all civic and martial virtues.

a spirit of judgement] The same phrase (but with a different meaning) occurs in ch. iv. 4. "Spirit" is used here as in ch. xi. 2. *to him that sitteth in judgement*] (or "on the judgement[-seat]")—the king or the judge (cf. ch. xxxii. 1).

for strength (or, **valour**) *to them that...gate*] Or, **to the gate**, not the gate of the enemy, but of the city or land (Nah. iii. 13) into which the enemy have penetrated. The promise is certainly remarkable for Isaiah (cf. Mic. v. 5 ff.).

7—13. The drunkards of Jerusalem.

7, 8 form the descriptive introduction to the dramatic incident represented in *vv.* 9—13; they are not part of Isaiah's spoken discourse on that occasion. The scene is evidently one of the chambers (*lishkāh*) of the Temple at Jerusalem, where the sacrificial feasts were held, often with such revolting excesses as are described in *v.* 8 (cf. 1 Sa. i. 13 f.; Am. ii. 8). Isaiah has surprised the revellers at an advanced stage of the proceedings, and notes with disgust the traces of their shameful self-indulgence. The opening words *But these also* connect this section with the preceding, but the connexion is due to similarity of subject, and not to coincidence of date. There are obvious reasons why the prediction of the fall of Samaria should be republished in the time of Sargon (710) or Sennacherib (*c.* 705). The magnates of Jerusalem were following the lead of Samaria, both in their dissolute habits and in their foolish trust in an Egyptian alliance; Samaria is a mirror in which they may read their own character and their own doom. On intemperance among the Judean nobility see ch. v. 11 f., 22.

7. *have erred...are gone astray*] Better as marg.: **reel...stagger.**

the priest and the prophet] Better: **priest and prophet.** These are specially mentioned as the spiritual leaders of the people, who opposed Isaiah in the name of Jehovah, and backed up the plans of the politicians with the pretended authority of divine revelation.

swallowed up of wine] Perhaps, "confused by wine," see on iii. 12.

vision (*rō'eh*, a peculiar form in the Heb.: see on *v.* 15 below) refers to the function of the prophets; *judgement* (lit. "judicial matters") to that of the priests (cf. Deut. xvii. 8 ff., xix. 17; Ezek. xliv. 24). It is not asserted that the prophets have no visions, but only that, through self-indulgence, they lack the capacity to discern their real significance.

ment. For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, *so* 8
that there is no place *clean*. [1]Whom will he teach know- 9
ledge? and whom will he make to understand the [2]message?
them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the
breasts? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon 10
precept; [3]line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there
a little. [4]Nay, but by *men of* strange lips and with another 11
tongue will he speak to this people: to whom he said, This 12

[1] Or, *Whom shall he teach...and whom shall he make...breasts. For &c.*
[2] Or, *report* [3] Or, *rule* [4] Or, *For with stammering lips*

8. *all tables*] The primitive table (*shulḥān*) was a leather mat spread on the floor; and probably this is the custom observed here.
vomit and *filthiness*] Shift the accent and render **vomit**; **filth everywhere** (lit. "filth without room"—for anything else).

9—13. The occasion of this remarkable encounter was probably a feast held to celebrate the renunciation of allegiance to Assyria.

9. The retort of the revellers to Isaiah's repeated admonitions. "Who are we that we should thus be lectured by this man? Are we newly-weaned infants, &c.?" *Whom will he teach knowledge?* expresses the injured self-consciousness of the priests; *whom will he make to understand the message?* that of the prophets. The word for *message* commonly means "report," but here it denotes "that which is heard" (by prophetic audition) from the Lord, as in *v.* 19; ch. liii. 1; Jer. xlix. 14; Ob. 1.

10. The topers proceed to mock, in stammering drunken tones, the excited utterance and the wearisome iterations of the prophet's teaching.
For it is precept upon precept...line upon line...here a little, there a little] The Heb. as pointed is a series of broken monosyllables (*ṣaw lāṣāw ṣaw lāṣāw ḳaw lāḳaw ḳaw lāḳaw zᵉʿēr shām zᵉʿēr shām*); the sense is far from certain, but the tones sufficiently represent at once the disgust of the speakers with the restless persistency of their monitor and their own inability to express themselves distinctly. The EVV. connect צַו with the verb צָוָה "command" (so Vulg., but as Impve.), and take קָו in its usual sense of "line." LXX. misread צַו as צַר (θλῖψις), and derive קָו (with Vulg.) from the verb for "hope." It is just possible that צַו and קָו are mocking reproductions of the words for "filth" (צֹאָה) and "vomit" (קִיא) in *v.* 8 (so Pesh.).

11. Isaiah parries the gibe with a terrible threat. Jehovah is about to employ a more uncouth language, to which their mincing syllables will fully apply, viz., the harsh barbarous accents of the Assyrian invaders.

stammering *lips* (marg.)] either "stammerings of lip" or "stammerers of lip" (cf. the Greek use of *βάρβαρος*). Comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 21.

12. *to whom he said*] Rather: **He who said to them.** The verse

is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the
13 refreshing: yet they would not hear. Therefore shall the
word of the LORD be unto them precept upon precept,
precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here
a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward,
and be broken, and snared, and taken.
14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men,
15 that rule this people which is in Jerusalem: Because ye
have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with

reproduces the tenor and aim of all Isaiah's political teaching (cf. *v.* 16; ch. xxx. 15). He had sought to point out the true way of rest for the exhausted nation by abstinence from an adventurous foreign policy which would plunge the country into the miseries of war. Two translations are possible. Either: "This (line of action) is the (true) rest... and this is the (true) refreshment," or "This is the (interval of) rest... and this is the breathing-space": i.e. the present is the time of recuperation before the final catastrophe. The latter seems preferable. The word for "rest" (usually "resting-place") is used in much the same sense in Jer. xlv. 3. "The weary" is the ordinary plebeian, who had everything to lose, and nothing to gain, by the chances of war.

13. *Therefore shall the word...*] Better perhaps: "And so it shall become a word of Jehovah to them, [this] '*zaw lazaw, zaw lazaw*,' &c." I.e. their incoherent mimicry (*v.* 10) of the prophet shall prove a divine oracle, to be fulfilled in a way they little expect—in a monotonous, unintelligible, yet unavoidable, succession of judgements (cf. *v.* 19).

that they may go, and **stumble** *backward*] (cf. ch. vi. 11, 12). *and be broken...taken*] exactly as ch. viii. 15.

14—22. The Covenant with Death. There is again a *literary* connexion with what precedes; although the passage is probably a summary of an independent discourse. The prophet's immediate aim is to impress on his opponents the disastrous consequences of persisting in their contemptuous attitude towards himself and his message.

14. *ye scornful men*] Better: **scoffing men.** The "scoffer" (*lēz*, a word almost confined to Pss. and Prov.) represents the last degree of ungodliness, – open contempt of religion. The phrase here is applied to worldly politicians, who form their plans in defiance of Jehovah's revealed will (cf. *v.* 22; ch. xxix. 20).

that rule this people] The prophet's antagonists, it would seem, have gained the upper hand in the councils of state; the king himself is tacitly acquitted of responsibility.

15 is the protasis to *v.* 16 f.

Because ye have said] Isaiah no doubt clothes the thoughts of the conspirators in his own language; but at the same time the expressions put into their mouths are not to be regarded as merely metaphorical or

[1]hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge
shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have
made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid
ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I 16
[2]lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a

[1] Heb. *Sheol.* [2] Or, *have laid*

proverbial. Two explanations may be given: (1) That the allusion is to religious ceremonies by which the treaty with Egypt had been placed under the sanction of Egyptian deities (see on ch. xxx. 1) like Osiris and Isis, who were gods of the dead. Such a transaction would naturally present itself to the Hebrew mind in the light of a covenant with the dread powers of the underworld. But, apart from this interpretation, the passage contains no allusion to the Egyptian alliance. (2) That the individuals addressed had made a private compact (by necromancy or otherwise, ch. viii. 19) with the dead in Sheol, assuring them of their personal safety if their policy should bring disaster on the state. In favour of this view is the fact that the latter part of the verse expresses no confidence in their power to avert catastrophe, but only in their personal immunity from its consequences. In any case, the feeling attributed to the schemers is one of absolute security against the worst that fate could bring, a security found in open abandonment of the national religion.

with hell are we at agreement] Lit. **with Sheol we have made a vision.** *Hozeh*, usually a "seer," has nowhere else the sense of "vision" (cf. *rō'eh* in *v.* 7): in *v.* 18 it is replaced by *hāzūth* (xxi. 2, xxix. 11). The expression "make a vision with" is very difficult: perhaps an agreement negotiated by means of a prophetic oracle. The rendering *agreement* follows LXX., Vulg., Targ.

the overflowing scourge] a mixture of metaphors, which is still further increased in *v.* 18. To read "the scourging scourge" (*shōṭ shōṭeṭ*) with Duhm and others is hardly an improvement.

we have made lies our refuge] The reference might be to conscious political treachery (towards Assyria), but more probably it is to false grounds of confidence, such as those just indicated, Isaiah putting his own language into their mouth.

16. There is but one true ground of confidence—Jehovah's revealed purpose with regard to Zion.

Behold, I lay...for a foundation] Strictly: **Behold, I am he that hath laid,** &c. (for the Heb. construction cf. ch. xxix. 14, xxxviii. 5; Ez. xxv. 7: see Ges.-Kautzsch, § 155 *f*). To substitute the ptcp. יֹסֵד would yield a more usual construction, but would give a future sense, which is less suitable here. The figure requires little explanation; it is illustrated by the massive and "costly" stones which formed the foundations of Solomon's temple (1 Ki. v. 17).

precious corner *stone* of sure foundation: he that believeth
17 shall not make haste. And I will make judgement the line,
and righteousness the plummet: and the hail shall sweep
away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the
18 hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be
disannulled, and your agreement with [1]hell shall not stand;
when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye

[1] Heb. *Sheol.*

of sure foundation] Omitting the word for "sure" as a dittography, the clause may be rendered "a costly corner-stone for a foundation." The general idea is that Jehovah's relation to Israel is the stable and permanent, though invisible, foundation of all God's work in the world. It is the positive counterpart of ch. viii. 14: the "stone of stumbling" and the "corner-stone" represent the negative and positive aspects of one spiritual truth, viz. that the purpose of God, as embodied in His revelation in the life of Israel, is the one element in human history which is indestructible. On this foundation will be built the religious community of the future—the new Israel, composed of the Remnant who shall "turn" and be saved. The stone, therefore, is not the empirical Zion, nor is the idea expressed the impregnability of Jerusalem. The prophet's thought still moves in the region of religious symbolism; it has not yet crystallised into the doctrine of the inviolability of the city of Jerusalem. See Introd. pp. lxviii ff.

he that believeth shall not make haste] These words may perhaps be taken as the inscription on the foundation stone (Schmidt). The LXX. reads "shall not be ashamed" (*yebôsh* for *yāhîsh*). Cheyne and others propose a slight emendation (*yāmûsh*) which gives the sense "shall not give way." This is the second great passage in which Isaiah emphasises faith as the primary condition of salvation (ch. vii. 9).

The image of the verse recurs in Ps. cxviii. 22; and is applied to the Messiah in Rom. ix. 33, x. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 6—8 (following the LXX. text).

17. The first half of the verse continues *v.* 16. *I will make judgement the line, and righteousness the plummet*] cf. ch. xxxiv. 11. In order to build on this foundation, it is necessary that political conduct be conformed to the eternal principles of the divine government; these are *judgement* and *righteousness* (see on i. 21), which are here compared to the builder's *line* and *plummet*.

and the hail...] Every course of action not based on faith in Jehovah, and not in accordance with the strict rule of the divine righteousness will prove a false refuge in the day of judgement, see *v.* 15 and cf. *v.* 2. Comp. also Matt. vii. 24—27. The verb *sweep away* is not found elsewhere.

18. See on *v.* 15. *shall be disannulled*] lit. "smeared over" (cf. Gen. vi. 14), i.e. "cancelled." The verb is the technical word for

shall be trodden down by it. As often as it passeth through, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night: and it shall be nought but terror to understand the [1]message. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not scorners, lest your bands be made strong: for a consummation, and that determined, have I

[1] Or, *report*

expiate (as e.g. xxii. 14), and although it is nowhere else in the O.T. used exactly as here, the sense is supported by Syriac usage, and an alteration of the text is not necessary.

19. *As often as it passeth through* (1 Sam. xviii. 30) *it shall take you* **away**] The judgement will be a protracted visitation (like the repeated blows of a "scourge") and will continue till every one of the conspirators has been carried away.

it shall be ... message] Perhaps: **it shall be sheer vexation to interpret audition** (the same word as in *v.* 9). That is, all prophetic oracles shall then be so uniformly and unambiguously terrible, that the prophet will shrink from the unwelcome task of communicating their import.

20. A proverbial expression for the intolerable situation which the politicians are preparing for themselves and their country.

21. The "strangeness" of Jehovah's work (*v.* 12, x. 12) consists in his fighting with the foreigners against his own people. The historical allusions are to David's victories over the Philistines in the vicinity of Jerusalem, about which more vivid traditions may have existed in Isaiah's time; see 2 Sam. v. 20 f.; 1 Chron. xiv. 11 f. (Baal-Perazim); 2 Sam. v. 25 (Geba); 1 Chron. xiv. 16 (Gibeon, as here). For *be wroth* render **rage.** The last two lines read: **To perform his act —strange is his act! And to work his work -barbaric is his work!** Cf. xxix. 14. Even Isaiah shudders at the appalling nature of the visitation which he sees to be inevitable.

22. A final appeal to the "scoffers" (*v.* 14), based on the irreversible decision of Jehovah.

be ye not scorners] **do not play the scoffer.**

lest your bands be made strong] i.e. "lest ye be firmly bound and delivered up for execution."

a consummation, and that determined] **a final and decisive** [**work**] (see on ch. x. 23).

heard from the Lord, the LORD of hosts, upon the whole [1]earth.

23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my
24 speech. Doth the plowman plow continually to sow? doth
he *continually* open and break the clods of his ground?
25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast
abroad the [2]fitches, and scatter the cummin, and put in the
wheat in rows and the barley in the appointed place and

[1] Or, *land* [2] Or, *black cummin* (*Nigella sativa*)

23—29. A parable derived from husbandry. The motive of its insertion in this place was probably the different treatment meted out to Samaria and to Jerusalem; or, more generally, the variety, the seeming discontinuity and inconsistency of God's providential dealings with men. It is, as Duhm calls it, "a kind of theodicy, on the plane of prophecy and history." The precise point of the analogy is somewhat obscure; but we may interpret the thought as follows: There are two equal strophes. The first (*vv.* 24–26) appears to justify Jehovah's procedure by the end He has in view. As the farmer does not go on ploughing for ever out of a mere blind passion for ploughing, but ploughs in order to sow; so Jehovah's work of judgement is to issue in the preparation of a seed-plot, and in due time ploughing will give place (in the case of Judah) to sowing. The second (*vv.* 27–29) draws the lesson that the operation of threshing varies with the material to be operated on. The delicate fennel, e.g., would be destroyed by the rough implements used on coarser grain; and in Judah there is (what there was not in Samaria) the tender growth of the "holy seed," the nucleus of the true Israel, for whose sake judgement must be tempered with mercy.

23. The introduction to the parable: cf. ch. xxxii. 9; Gen. iv. 23.

24—26. Ploughing is followed by sowing.

24. *continually*] lit. "all the day," i.e. "uninterruptedly." The emphasis of the question lies on this word.

to sow is an awkward addition and may be a gloss. If genuine the sense must be paraphrased "seeing he has the intention of sowing."

doth he open...ground] Trans. **doth he (continually) open and harrow his ground?**

25. *fitches* (marg. **black cummin** [*Nigella sativa*]) and *cummin* [*Cuminum sativum*] are both mentioned only in this passage. Note the different methods of sowing; **scatter** (of the fitches), **sow** (of the cummin), **plant** (of wheat and barley). The planting of wheat, &c. (in rows) is a mark of the most careful husbandry, still practised in Yemen and Egypt. The last half of the verse is to be rendered thus: **and plant wheat and barley, and spelt as a border for it.** The words for *in rows*, and *in the appointed place* are wanting in the LXX. and are to be deleted as mistakes or glosses.

the spelt in the border thereof? [1]For his God doth instruct 26
him aright, *and* doth teach him. For the fitches are not 27
threshed with a sharp *threshing* instrument, neither is a cart
wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are
beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. [2]Bread 28
corn is ground; for he will not ever be threshing it: and
though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he
doth not grind it. This also cometh forth from the LORD 29

[1] Or, *And he traineth each of them aright; his God doth teach him*
[2] Or, *Is bread* corn *crushed? Nay, he will not ever be threshing it, and driving his cart wheels and his horses over it: he doth not crush it*

the spelt (others, "vetches") **as its border**] The allusion apparently is to a custom of surrounding certain crops with a protecting border of hardier plants.

26. All this is done in obedience to an inherited, almost instinctive, wisdom, which rests ultimately on divine inspiration. See *v.* 29; and Ecclus. vii. 15 ("husbandry which the Most High hath ordained"). Virg. *Georg.* i. 147.

aright] "to right, or orderly method." The word is that usually rendered "judgement," used here in a non-ethical application.

27—29. Threshing is not bruising. Three methods of threshing are alluded to. (*a*) Beating with a rod or flail (cf. Jud. vi. 11; Ruth ii. 17). (*b*) Treading with the feet of cattle (Deut. xxv. 4; Mic. iv. 13; but see on *v.* 28). (*c*) Drawing a heavy wooden sledge, with sharp stones or iron spikes fixed in its under surface (*ḥāriṣ*) or a wagon (*'ăgālāh*) with a great number of sharp-edged wheels, over the grain. The point of the illustration is that the method suitable to one kind of grain would be ruinous to another (*v.* 27); and that even the rougher methods are applied with moderation (*v.* 28).

27. *with a sharp* threshing *instrument*] the sledge (*ḥāriṣ*). *a cart wheel*] the wheel of a threshing wagon (*'ăgālāh*).

28. Transl. **Is bread (corn) crushed? Nay, he does not keep threshing it perpetually,** &c. If the text be right, the sentence continues "and rolling his wagon-wheels and horses over it, &c." But the mention of "horses" as employed in agriculture is suspicious, and a better sense is gained if, with Duhm, we slightly change the text of that word (to פָּרַשׂ) and translate thus: **But when he has rolled his wagon-wheel (over it), He spreads it out** (so that fresh corn may be exposed to the wheel) **without crushing it.**

29. To Isaiah there is something very impressive in the peasant's subtle yet unpretentious knowledge of his craft; he is like a part of nature, and his wisdom seems a direct emanation from the infinite Wisdom to which all things owe their being (cf. *v.* 26).

of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in [1]wisdom.

29 [2]Ho [3]Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! add

[1] Or, *effectual working* [2] Or, *Woe to*
[3] That is, *The lion of God* or, *The hearth of God.*

which is wonderful...wisdom] **wonderful is His counsel, great His insight**; lit. "He produces wonderful counsel, He magnifies wisdom" (cf. "Wonderful Counsellor," ch. ix. 6). The word rendered "wisdom" is a technical term of the Wisdom Literature. It seems to denote that which is essentially rational. "It is said of a state or action when it corresponds to the idea; and conversely of thought when it corresponds to the reality" (Davidson, *Job*, on v. 12, in this series).

CH. XXIX. 1—14. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF JEHOVAH'S WONDERFUL PURPOSE REGARDING JERUSALEM, AND ITS RECEPTION ON THE PART OF THE PEOPLE.

Under the second "Woe" (*v.* 1) are grouped three oracles, which may have been originally independent; or they may be intimately connected, the second describing the effect of the first on the minds of Isaiah's hearers, and the third the predisposing religious condition which makes such effect inevitable.

i. *vv.* 1—8. The impending humiliation and deliverance of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, apostrophised by the mystic name of "Ariel," is at present gay and careless and secure, the festal calendar follows its accustomed course, and this state of things may endure for a few years longer (1). But already in vision the prophet sees her beset by hosts of enemies, and reduced to the lowest depth of enfeeblement: nay as having actually disappeared into the realm of the dead (2—4), when suddenly the Lord Himself, arrayed in the terrors of earthquake and tempest, appears in judgement (6), and in a moment the scene is changed. In the very hour of their triumph, the enemies of Zion are disappointed of their expectation, and vanish like a vision of the night (7, 8).

ii. *vv.* 9—12. Jehovah has visited the leaders of the people with judicial blindness (9 f.); the consequence is that neither among the cultured nor the unlettered can the word of the Lord find entrance (11 f.).

iii. *vv.* 13, 14. Because the popular religion has degenerated into a mechanical routine of traditional observances (13) it is necessary for Jehovah to adopt startling measures, transcending all human calculation and insight (14).

1—8. Jerusalem's time of joyous security shall soon come to an end.

1. *Ho Ariel, Ariel, [the] city where David encamped*] Of the word "Ariel" two explanations (see marg.) are given. (*a*) That which

ye year to year; let the feasts come round: then will I 2
distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation:
[1]and she shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp 3
against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee

[1] Or, *yet*

renders it "Lion of God" is undoubtedly the one most naturally suggested by the form of the word. It is also thought to be confirmed by the proper name *'ar'êlî* in Gen. xlvi. 16; Num. xxvi. 17; and the "lion-like men" (*'ărî'êl*) of 2 Sam. xxiii. 20, 1 Chron. xi. 22; all these analogies, however, are very doubtful (cf. ch. xxxiii. 7). But is it suitable in the present context? Hardly, unless we take *v.* 2 to mean that Jerusalem when driven to bay, will exhibit a prowess worthy of her mystic appellation; which is not at all the idea of the passage. The name is in any case a strange one for a city, and it would be difficult to account for its selection by Isaiah. (*b*) The other (and preferable) explanation is given by the Targum, and is supported by a word which occurs in two forms (*har'êl* and *'ari'êl*) in Ezek. xliii. 15 f. It appears to mean "altar-hearth"; and occurs, probably in the same sense, in the inscription of the Moabite Stone. The translation here will be either "hearth of God" or (better) simply "altar-hearth." How Isaiah was led to such a designation we shall see from *v.* 2.

where David encamped] Not "against which" David encamped, as the LXX. fancied (see on *v.* 3), but which he occupied and fortified.

add ye year to year] i.e. "let a year or two more come and go": cf. xxxii. 10. The discourse was probably delivered at the leading festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the "turn of the year" (Ex. xxxiv. 22) in ancient Israel.

let the feasts come round] "run their round"—but only a few times more.

2—5. The humiliation and distress of Ariel, at the hands of the Assyrians. The speaker is now Jehovah.

2. *there shall be mourning and lamentation*] better (as reproducing the assonance of the original): **moaning and bemoaning** (Cheyne). The expression recurs in Lam. ii. 5.

she shall be unto me as Ariel] **thou shalt be to me like a (true) altar-hearth** (changing the text slightly to preserve the apostrophe). If Ariel meant "Lion of God" this clause would necessarily have to be understood in a favourable sense; on the view here followed it may be either a promise or a threat; the context decides for the latter. The meaning is that Jerusalem will be either a place where the flames of war rage fiercely, or a place reeking with the blood of countless human victims. We may suppose that Isaiah addressed these words to the worshippers in the Temple, and that the great altar with its bleeding victims stood out before his vision as an emblem of Jerusalem's fate, and suggested the name "Ariel."

3. *I will camp against thee round about*] see *v.* 1. LXX. carries the

4 with a fort, and I will raise siege works against thee. And
thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the
ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and
thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out
of the ground, and thy speech shall [1]whisper out of the
5 dust. But the multitude of thy [2]foes shall be like small
dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that
6 passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. [3]She
shall be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and
with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and

[1] Or, *chirp* [2] Heb. *strangers.*
[3] Or, *There shall be a visitation from the* LORD *&c.*

parallel still further by reading "I will encamp *like David*" (כדוד for כדור), a reading which would be plausible if "against which" could be fairly supplied in *v.* 1. "Round about" is the same word as "like a ball" in xxii. 18.

with a fort] perhaps lines of circumvallation formed by the chariots and wagons of the besieging army (Duhm).

siege works] see Deut. xx. 20. Comp. Ez. iv. 1—3.

4. A further stage: the "moaning and bemoaning" are hushed; the city has sunk down to Sheol: see ch. v. 14, 17. The verse reads:

And low from the earth shalt thou speak,
And deep from the dust shall thy speech (come):
And like a ghost from the earth shall be thy voice,
And from the dust shall thy voice twitter.

5—8. The discomfiture and dispersion of Zion's enemies in the hour of their triumph. The abruptness of the transition from threatening to promise has led Duhm and others to regard these *vv.* as a spurious addendum to Isaiah's prophecy. But that is to cut the knot instead of untying it. The passage (which should be read along with ch. xxxi. 4—9) reflects the tension in Isaiah's mind at one period of his career,—the conflict between a "fearful looking for of judgement" even to the uttermost, and the assurance of ultimate salvation of what was good in Israel. That the antithesis should be pressed beyond the limits of concrete representation, is only natural in a semi-ecstatic condition such as is here presupposed.

5. *thy foes*] So R.V., reading צריך for זריך (see marg.).

the terrible ones] or **the tyrants.** For the figures of the *v.*, cf. ch. xvii. 13.

6. The last words of *v.* 5 should be read as part of this sentence. **And suddenly, full suddenly, shalt thou be visited,** &c. The crisis is introduced by these words: the first part of *v.* 5 is an awkward anticipation, and must be removed as either a variant of *v.* 6, or an unauthorised

tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. And the 7
multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even
all that fight against her and her strong hold, and that
distress her, shall be as a dream, a vision of the night.
And it shall be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, 8
behold, he eateth: but he awaketh, and his soul is empty:
or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he
drinketh: but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his
soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations
be, that fight against mount Zion.

[1]Tarry ye and wonder: [2]take your pleasure and be blind: 9
they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not

[1] Or, *Be ye amazed* [2] Or, *blind yourselves and be blind*

addition. The word for "visit" is ambiguous, being freely used both of punishment and mercy, but the passive appears never to be employed in a good sense except here.

7, 8. The figure of the dream is applied in two ways; first, objectively, to the vanishing of the enemy; second, subjectively, to his disappointment. *V.* 8, however, seems to lack the poetic form, and may be only a prose duplicate of *v.* 7.

7. *all that fight...strong hold*] The text is doubtful. We may venture to amend it with Duhm in accordance with *v.* 3, and read: **their chariot-wall and their siege-work**.

8. *dreameth, and, behold*] The invariable formula in narrating a dream; Gen. xl. 9, 16, xli. 1 ff.; Dan. ii. 31, vii. 5, 6.

his soul] the seat of appetite and desire: cf. v. 14, xxxii. 6; Prov. vi. 30. A more vivid representation of utter disenchantment can scarcely be conceived.

9—12. The people meet their doom in a state of spiritual stupor, unobservant of Jehovah's work, and heedless of the warnings given to them.

9. *Tarry ye and wonder*] Rather (as marg.), **Be ye amazed and wonder**, or "astonish yourselves and be astonished" (Cheyne). The first verb (*hithmahmĕhû*) is correctly rendered by R.V. (cf. Gen. xix. 16, xliii. 10, &c.); but the sense is unsuitable, the two verbs are obviously cognates (from the root *tamah*): read therefore *hittammĕhû*, as Hab. i. 5.

take your pleasure and be blind] Here again R.V. quite needlessly assumes two entirely different verbs. Render, as marg.: **blind yourselves and be blind**. The root of both verbs is that used in ch. vi. 10 of "smearing" the eyes: the doom then threatened is now being fulfilled.

they are drunken...they stagger] These perfects should probably be

10 with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon
you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed [1]your eyes, the
11 prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered. And
all vision is become unto you as the words of a [2]book that
is sealed, which men deliver to one that [3]is learned, saying,
Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is
12 sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned,
saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not
learned.

13 And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh
unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honour
me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their

[1] Or, *your eyes; the prophets, and &c.* [2] Or, *writing*
[3] Heb. *knoweth writing* (or *letters*).

pointed and translated as imperatives; "be drunken, &c." (so the LXX.).

10. Their infatuation is caused by Jehovah; see on ch. vi. 10.

deep sleep] The word (*tardēmāh*) is nearly always used of a profound hypnotic slumber, due to supernatural agency (1 Sam. xxvi. 12) and favourable for the reception of divine revelations (Job iv. 13). The expressions *the prophets* and *the seers* are obviously glosses, based on a misconception of the meaning of the verse. Render: **hath tightly closed** (cf. ch. xxxiii. 15) **your eyes, and your heads hath he muffled.**

11, 12. A distinction is drawn between the ignorance of the educated and that of the uneducated classes. The man of culture is like one who *will* not break the seal of a sealed book that he may read it; the man in the street *cannot* read it even if unsealed. The passage is interesting as illustrating the diffusion of literary education in Isaiah's time (cf. Jer. v. 4, 5).

11. *all vision*] more correctly **the vision of all**; i.e. the revelation of all this (cf. Ps. xlix. 17, "all that").

learned] is literally "knowing letters."

13, 14. This spiritual insensibility of the people is the outcome of its whole religious attitude, which is insincere, formal, and traditional. The contrast implied is that between a religion of mere ritual and one of moral fellowship with God.

13. *draw nigh* unto (i.e. worship) me, *and with their mouth and with their lips do honour me*] **draw nigh me with their mouth, and honour me with their lips.** A.V. is here unquestionably right against R.V., which slavishly follows the Hebrew accentuation. *with their mouth...their lips*]—uttering the prescribed liturgical formulæ.

have removed their heart far] Better **while their heart is far** (point *rāhok*). The heart is the organ of intelligence and moral obedience and inclination (cf. Prov. xxiii. 26).

fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been
[1]taught *them*: therefore, behold, I will [2]proceed to do a 14
marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work
and a wonder: and the wisdom of their wise men shall
perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall
be hid.

[1] Or, *learned* by rote [2] Or, *again do* Heb. *add to do.*

their fear of me] i.e. their piety, religion. Matt. xv. 9, μάτην δὲ σέβονταί με, follows the interesting and possibly correct reading of the LXX. (וַתְּהִי for וְתָהִי): "and their religion is vanity,—a human commandment, &c."

a commandment of men which hath been taught] a human tradition learned by rote (cf. Matt. xv. 1—9). This pregnant criticism expresses with incisive force the fundamental difference between the pagan and the biblical conceptions of religion. Religion, being personal fellowship with God, cannot be "learned" from men, but only by revelation (Matt. xvi. 17).

14. Israel being thus hopelessly estranged from true knowledge of Jehovah, Jehovah must (and will) reveal His character in a way not to be misunderstood.

behold, I will proceed] The Heb. has the same peculiar construction as in xxviii. 16.

to do a marvellous...wonder] Render: **to work wonderfully with this people, wonderfully and wondrously** (cf. xxviii. 21).

the wisdom of their wise men (cf. Jer. xviii. 18) *shall perish*] so far will the issue surpass human forethought.

shall be hid] **shall hide itself**, in shame and confusion.

Ch. XXIX. 15—24. A Messianic forecast.

The third "Woe" (*v.* 15), directed against the political intrigue with Egypt, merely serves as a point of attachment for a glowing eschatological picture of the regeneration of society in Israel. The course of thought is as follows:—

The prophet, having unmasked the designs of the conspirators, expostulates with them for pitting their foolish plans against the purpose of the Almighty (*vv.* 15, 16). Ere long, Jehovah will prove His power by a marvellous transformation of nature and society; the word of the Lord will be received by the people, now deaf and dumb to spiritual things; the poor and oppressed shall rejoice in their God (*vv.* 17—19). In tha glorious age there shall be neither tyrant nor scoffer,—neither oppression from without, nor injustice within the state (*vv.* 20, 21). The time of Israel's humiliation shall soon pass away, never to return;

15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from
the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say,
16 Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? [1]Ye turn things
upside down! Shall the potter be counted as clay; that
the thing made should say of him that made it, He made
me not; or the thing framed say of him that framed it, He

[1] Or, *O your perversity!*

and those who at present are perplexed and discontented shall accept the instruction of true religion (*vv.* 22—24).

In this section, however, only *v.* 15 can be confidently attributed to Isaiah. *V.* 16 by itself, apart from its close connexion with what follows, might, indeed, be explained as the original continuation of *v.* 15. But in the sequel slight indications multiply that the background of the prophecy is not the world of Isaiah's day. This impression may not be altogether trustworthy; but it is confirmed by a comparison with ch. xxx. 18—26, a passage of very similar character and tone, but with non-Isaianic features more pronounced than here. In both cases, affinities with genuine writings of Isaiah appear; but they are more in expression than in thought; and even in expression there is a stronger resemblance to later literature. The facts give ground for the theory that we have here to do with the work of a later writer, who has sought to adapt the teaching of Isaiah to the circumstances of his own time.

15. Cf. xxx. 1, xxxi. 1. *that seek deep to hide their counsel from the* LORD] **that hide a plan deep from Jehovah.** The Egyptian party at court had done their utmost to conceal their project from Isaiah; this attempt to deceive God's prophet is an act of rebellion, an attempt to steal a march on Jehovah. That they had other reasons for working in the dark is no doubt true; but these were of small moment compared with the sin of refusing to Jehovah a voice in their counsels of state.

16. Shall the creature attempt to outwit the Creator?

Ye turn...down] Better as marg.: **O your perversity!** *Shall the potter be counted as clay?*] "Is there no difference between maker and thing made?" On the image of the clay and the potter, cf. ch. xlv. 9, lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 6; Rom. ix. 21 ff.

17. The transformation of the physical world, with which the eschatological picture commences, is expressed in terms almost identical with, and perhaps borrowed from, ch. xxxii. 15. The idea in both passages is the same. Lebanon is here not a symbol of the heathen world-power (as in x. 34), but a synonym for forest-land in general, corresponding to "wilderness" (uncultivated pasture-land) in xxxii. 15. The second half of the verse is not a contrast to the first, but a climax: while Lebanon actually becomes a fruitful field, what is now a fruitful field shall then be *counted* no better than a forest.

hath no understanding? Is it not yet a very little while, 17
and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the
fruitful field shall be counted for a forest? And in that day 18
shall the deaf hear the words of [1]the book, and the eyes of
the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.
The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the 19
poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner 20
ceaseth, and all they that watch for iniquity are cut off:
that [2]make a man an offender in a cause, and lay a snare 21
for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just
with a thing of nought. Therefore thus saith the LORD, 22

[1] Or, *a book* or *writing*
[2] Or, *make men to offend by* their *words*

yet a very little while] as in ch. x. 25 (cf. xvi. 14).

18. *the words of the book*] There is a reference implied to *vv.* 11, 12. "Deafness" and "blindness" are metaphors for the spiritual obtuseness which at present characterises the nation (*v.* 10).

19. The *meek* and *poor* (as often in the Psalms) are the oppressed and God-fearing lower orders, as contrasted with the irreligious upper class (*vv.* 20 f.). They have now no hope but in Jehovah; then they shall **obtain fresh joy** in Him, because He has delivered them.

20. *the terrible one*] or **tyrant** probably denotes an external oppressor (?the Assyrian); cf. xxv. 3, 4; *the scorner* is the despiser of religion within the community (ch. xxviii. 14, 22; Ps. i. 1, &c.).

all they that watch for iniquity] Perhaps "those who are wakefully intent upon plans of mischief" (Mic. ii. 1; Am. viii. 5). Some think the phrase is ironical, implying that those spoken of were appointed to watch over right, but betrayed their trust in the manner described in *v.* 21.

21. *that make a man an offender in a cause*] The verb rendered "make an offender" usually means "lead into sin" (Ex. xxiii. 33; Eccles. v. 6, &c.); and is so understood in marg. "make men to offend by *their* words." Here, however, the second part of the verse seems to shew that it is used in a declarative sense ("make a man out to be an offender"). *in a cause* may be translated **by a word**; i.e. by false witness.

him that reproveth in the gate] (cf. Am. v. 10). The person indicated may be either a judge ("umpire," as Job ix. 33) or a private individual who stands up for justice in the place of public assembly.

turn aside the just (from his right, ch. x. 2; Am. v. 12) *with a thing of nought*] "on an empty pretext."

who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:
Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now
23 wax pale. [1]But when he seeth his children, the work of
mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my
name; yea, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and
24 shall stand in awe of the God of Israel. They also that err
in spirit [2]shall come to understanding, and they that murmur
shall learn [3]doctrine.

[1] Or, *But when his children see &c.*
[2] Heb. *shall know understanding.* [3] Or, *instruction*

22. *concerning the house of Jacob*] Duhm, following Lowth, reads "the God of the house of Jacob" (אֱלֹהֵי for אֶל־). The slight emendation removes the difficulty caused by the position of the relative sentence *who redeemed Abraham*, which in the Hebrew comes after "house of Jacob." At the same time an allusion to the "redemption" of Abraham remains suspicious in the present context; and the metre is certainly improved by its excision. There is no incident in the biblical history of Abraham to which the expression "redeem" is specially appropriate; there is, however, a late Jewish legend about his being delivered from a fiery death prepared for him by his heathen relations (Book of Jubilees, ch. xii.).

not now] spoken from the standpoint of the ideal future.

23. *when he seeth his children, the work...*] Marg. "when his children see the work" [lit. "when he (his children) shall see the work, &c."]. Neither rendering is satisfactory, and "his children" should be omitted as a marginal gloss.

sanctify...stand in awe] The same words are used in ch. viii. 13.

24. The meaning is that even the least capable and most refractory classes of the community shall willingly subject themselves to the teaching of revelation.

understanding and *doctrine* are words characteristic of the Hebrew Wisdom Literature (xxviii. 29).

Ch. XXX. Oracles dealing with the Egyptian Alliance and its consequences; the present state and future prospects of Israel, and the destruction of the Assyrians.

i. *vv.* 1—5. A "Woe" against the treaty with Egypt, which is here for the first time referred to in express terms. The prophet denounces it as an enterprise contrary to Jehovah's will (1, 2) and based on an absurdly exaggerated estimate of the resources of Egypt (3—5).

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take 30
counsel, but not of me; and that [1]cover with a covering,
but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that 2

[1] Or, *weave a web* Or, *pour out a drink offering* Or, *make a league*

ii. *vv.* 6—8. In a strange vision (6, 7) the same truths are impressed on the prophet's mind, and are afterwards recorded by him in writing (8).

iii. *vv.* 9—17. Isaiah sees in this the crowning evidence of the rebellious disposition of the nation, its contempt for the organs of revelation, and antipathy to the holy rule of Jehovah (9—11). The disastrous consequences are then set forth by the help of an effective comparison (12—14); and finally the true and the false policy for Israel are tersely summed up and contrasted, and the issue of the choice that has been made is clearly indicated (15—17).

iv. *vv.* 18—26. A picture of the blessings reserved for the people of God in the Messianic dispensation. The principal features are, a teachable disposition in the people (20, 21), the cessation of idolatry (22), and a miraculous transformation of the external aspect of nature (23—26). The passage is remarkably similar in character to ch. xxix. 15—24.

v. *vv.* 27—33. The destruction of Assyria accomplished by a terrible display of Jehovah's might. Jehovah in person suddenly appears on the scene, not, as in iii. 14, to judge His own people, but to execute vengeance on their enemies (27, 28); the Israelites are but spectators of the catastrophe and accompany its progress with songs of rejoicing (29—32); while the remains of the Assyrian host are consumed on the vast funereal pyre which the prophet's imagination sees already prepared for their cremation (33).

1—5. The futile alliance with Egypt denounced. Comp. xxix. 15, xxxi. 1.

1. *Woe to the rebellious children*] See on i. 2, 4 and i. 23; cf. xxx. 9. The "sons" are "rebellious" inasmuch as they have taken this step without consulting Jehovah, their Father and Counsellor.

that take counsel] Rather, **in that they carry out a plan**: their rebelliousness consists in this. The inf. is used exactly as in ch. v. 22.

cover with a covering] R.V. gives in the margin two translations, between which it is difficult to choose: either **weave a web** or **pour out a drink offering**. The latter is preferable, although the noun does not occur elsewhere with the sense of "libation" (see xxv. 7, xxviii. 20, "covering"): on the other hand the verb never means "weave." The allusion is to drink-offerings accompanying the conclusion of the treaty (comp. σπονδή = libation with σπονδαί = covenant). This un-Israelitish ceremony, involving homage to Egyptian deities, would be an additional reason for concealing the project from Isaiah.

not of (**with**) *my spirit*] i.e. not in accordance with the spirit of prophecy speaking through Isaiah.

that they may add sin to sin] the sin of concealment to the original sin of dallying with secular alliances.

walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my
mouth; to [1]strengthen themselves in the strength of
3 Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore
shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust
4 in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For his princes
5 are at Zoan, and his ambassadors are come to Hanes. They
shall all be ashamed of a people that cannot profit them,

[1] Or, *flee to the strong hold of Pharaoh*

2. *and have not asked at my mouth*] "have not consulted my prophet" (for the expression cf. Josh. ix. 14; Gen. xxiv. 57).

to strengthen themselves...Egypt] Rather: **to take refuge in the refuge of Pharaoh, and to hide in the shadow of Egypt.**

3. *strength...trust*] **refuge...hiding**; as *v.* 2.

4, 5. *V.* 4 is important for the date of the negotiations with Egypt. *Zoan* (see on ch. xix. 11) was at the N.E. extremity of the Delta; *Hanes* is identified with Heracleopolis magna (Egyptian *Hnes*, still called *Ahnâs*), situated to the south of Memphis, W. of the Nile. Zoan and Hanes thus mark the extreme limits of *Lower* Egypt; and the implication seems to be that the dominion of the Pharaoh of *vv.* 2 f. extended so far and no further. Now this was the case just before Shabaka's invasion, when Lower Egypt was ruled by a number of petty potentates, amongst whom the prince of Sais (Bocchoris) held a kind of primacy and assumed the title of Pharaoh. But the Ethiopian conquest is dated by Breasted about 712, from which time till 700 Shabaka was overlord of the whole of Egypt. Hence, while it may be accidental that the name Pharaoh is nowhere applied to the Ethiopian sovereigns of Egypt, it remains doubtful if Shabaka can be the particular Pharaoh here referred to. The conclusion is by no means certain, but on the whole the indications of this passage point to the revolt under Sargon from 714—711, rather than to the rebellion against Sennacherib (705—701), with which the prophecy has usually been connected. See Introd. p. xxxv.

If the "princes" and "ambassadors" are those of Judah, the meaning would be that the embassy would visit all the little courts of the Delta from North to South and meet with a discouraging reception. There are two objections to this interpretation, (1) Judah has not been mentioned in the preceding context and (2) Isaiah's contention appears to be, not that the Judean overtures would be coldly received, but that the Egyptians would be ready enough to promise but slack in performance. It is more natural to suppose that the "his" refers to Pharaoh, in which case *v.* 4 must be read as the protasis to *v.* 5, the sense being "Great as the extent of the Pharaoh's sphere of influence may be, yet nothing but shame will come to those who trust in his help." Render thus: (4) **For though his** (Pharaoh's) **princes are in Zoan and his messengers reach to Hanes, (5) Yet all come to shame**

that are not an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

The [1]burden of the beasts of the South. 6

Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*

through a people of no profit, a people that brings no help [and no profit] but shame and also reproach.

The reading "come to shame" is that of the Massoretic punctuation (*Qerê*). The consonantal text (*Kethîb*) has a much harsher word—"become stinking." The perfect is that of experience.

For *them* (לָמוֹ) read as above **to a people** (לְעַם).

that are not an help] An almost identical phrase is used by Sargon of "Pir'u king of Muṣri—a prince who could not save."

6–8. The impotence of Egypt. These verses are marked as an independent oracle by a heading in the enigmatic style of those in ch. xxi., xxii. Some commentators regard the title as an editorial note which has crept into the text from the margin; but the substance of the oracle, which is a parallel to, rather than a continuation of, *vv.* 1—5, favours the supposition that it was originally distinct. From the analogy of xxi. 1, 13, xxii. 1, we should expect the superscription to be suggested by some striking phrase in the body of the prophecy. There is, however, nothing in the text as it stands to suggest "beasts of the South." "The South" means the Negeb, the desert region to the south of Judah, traversed by the Jewish ambassadors on their way to Egypt. The "beasts" might be either the beasts of burden painfully making their way through it (*v.* 6) or the wild animals by which it is haunted (*v.* 6). The text is probably corrupt, and Duhm's suggestion that the title reproduces some lost words at the beginning of the oracle is probably on the right track. Reading בשמות for בהמות, he restores the first line thus: "In the wastes of the Negeb."

The whole tone of the oracle suggests a visionary experience in which the prophet's waking thoughts clothe themselves in the weird imagery of a dream. He is transported to a doleful and terrible region, frequented by monsters real and fabulous,—roaring lions, creeping snakes and flying dragons. Then a caravan passes before him; he recognises it as the Jewish embassy to the Egyptian court. His sense of the fatuity of the whole enterprise concentrates itself in a mysterious oracular sentence which bursts involuntarily from his lips, and which on awaking he writes on a tablet.

6. In a *land of trouble and anguish*] Better perhaps **distress and hardship**, cf. Deut. viii. 15; Jer. ii. 6.

the lioness and the lion] Really two different words for "lion." Hebrew (like Arabic) is rich in synonyms for the lion.

fiery flying serpent] **winged Saraph.** See on vi. 2, xiv. 29; cf. Num.

serpent, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young
asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a
7 people that shall not profit *them.* For Egypt helpeth in
vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I [1]called her Rahab
8 that sitteth still. Now go, write it before them on a tablet,
and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to
9 come [2]for ever and ever. For it is a rebellious people,

[1] Or, *cried concerning this, They are* but *arrogancy: be still*
[2] Or, according to some ancient authorities, *for a witness for ever*

xxi. 6. These are some of the terrors braved by the Jewish envoys in the prosecution of their foolhardy enterprise. Esar-haddon speaks of having encountered two-headed serpents while crossing the same desert in 670; and Herodotus (II. 75) professes to have seen in Egypt bones of winged serpents that haunted the isthmus of Suez.

they carry their riches...] The ambassadors take with them a whole caravan of presents to the Egyptian courts.

7. *For Egypt...purpose*] Render **And Egypt—their help is vain and empty.** Cf. *vv.* 3, 5.

have I called her] Perhaps A.V. is better: "I cry concerning this."

Rahab that sitteth still] lit. "Rahab, they are a sitting still," or "Rahab are they, a sitting still." The sentence is hopelessly obscure. "Rahab" is the name of a mythological monster, a sea-dragon (ch. li. 9; Job ix. 13, xxvi. 12), which became a symbol of Egypt (Ps. lxxxvii. 4, lxxxix. 10), although that use may be based on this verse. Etymologically it signifies "insolent arrogance" (the root occurs in ch. iii. 5); and all three senses may be combined in this instance. The general idea is, "This proud boastful monster—its proper name is 'Inaction.'" Of the numerous emendations proposed the most plausible is that of Gunkel, רהב הַמְשֻׁבָּת (Rahab, who is quelled).

8. What is it that Isaiah is here directed to commit to writing? According to Delitzsch, the contents of the short oracle, *vv.* 6, 7; according to others, merely the enigmatic sentence with which it closes. That is not improbable; the mention of a "tablet" indicates some short and striking inscription. But since a "book" is mentioned along with the tablet, it is possible that Isaiah at this time wrote a summary of his deliverances on the subject of the Egyptian alliance. Hence it is only with some hesitation that we attach *v.* 8 to *vv.* 6, 7. The incident is closely parallel to that referred to in ch. viii. 16, where Isaiah prepares documentary evidence of his prophetic actions after his advice had been rejected by the court and people.

For *go* read **go in**—"retire to thy house."

for the time to come for ever and ever] Render **for a future day, for**

lying children, children that will not hear the [1]law of the LORD: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, 10
Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth
things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside 11
out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from
before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, 12
Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and
perverseness, and stay thereon; therefore this iniquity shall 13

[1] Or, *teaching*

a witness (marg.) **for ever**. The pointing has to be altered in accordance with most ancient versions.

9—17. The false and the true policies contrasted.

9—11. The people's rejection of Isaiah's message is rebellion against the Holy One of Israel.

9. *lying children*] or **faithless sons**; see on ch. i. 2, cf. Mal. i. 6.

the law] **the revelation**, as ch. i. 10.

10. *the seers*] (1 Sam. ix. 9.)

to the prophets...right things] Better: **to the visionaries, Do not have visions of realities**. The word *hāzeh* (rightly rendered "seer" in Am. vii. 12 and elsewhere) denotes specifically the man who has spiritual vision of things unseen. See on i. 1. The prophets referred to can hardly (in view of *v.* 11) be merely the false prophets, who were at the beck and call of the people, but all representatives of the prophetic office. Cf. Am. ii. 12, vii. 12; Hos. ix. 7, 8; Mic. ii. 6, 11, iii. 5, 11; Jer. vi. 14, xiv. 13 ff.; Ezek. xiii. 10 ff.

deceits] **illusions**; the word is used only here. It is Isaiah's own estimate that is put into the mouth of the people.

11. *get you out of the way, turn aside...*] i.e. "Discontinue your hackneyed methods: adopt a more conciliatory tone, and do not seek to influence us by reiterated prophecies of evil."

cause the Holy One of Israel to cease] The meaning is not, of course, that the people disown Jehovah as the national deity, but that they repudiate Isaiah's conception of Him as the Holy One of Israel, and the teaching based on that conception.

cause to cease] lit. "quench."

12—14. The answer of "Israel's Holy One," whose revelation is thus challenged.

12. *this word*] the warnings against the Egyptian alliance.

oppression and perverseness (lit. "crookedness")] The first word is explained of the oppressive war taxation necessitated by the policy now finally decided on; this is not altogether obvious, and some prefer, by transposing two consonants (עִקֵּשׁ), to read "perverseness and crookedness." The same words are conjoined in Prov. ii. 15.

13. Disaster will follow their policy with the necessity of a natural

be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high
14 wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And
he shall break it as a potter's vessel is broken, breaking it in
pieces without sparing; so that there shall not be found
among the pieces thereof a sherd to take fire from the
15 hearth, or to take water withal out of the cistern. For thus
said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, In returning
and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence
16 shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No,
for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We
will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you

law. The best translation seems to be: **Therefore this guilt shall be to you as a rent descending** (lit. "falling") **(and) bulging out in a high wall, whose crash comes**, &c. The slight beginnings of transgression, its inevitable tendency to gravitate more and more from the moral perpendicular, till a critical point is reached, then the suddenness of the final catastrophe,—are vividly expressed by this magnificent simile. (Comp. Ps. lxii. 3.) "First unbelief, then secret intrigues; lastly open rejection of the divine warnings" (Duhm)—these are the stages by which the breach between Jehovah and His people gradually widens, till it ends in the irreparable collapse of the state.

suddenly at an instant] Cf. ch. xxix. 5.

14. *And he shall break...*] or (pointing as LXX.): **And its breaking** [shall be] **like the breaking of a potter's vessel.**

breaking it in pieces without sparing] Better: **shivered unsparingly**, i.e. irreparably.

there shall not be found...a sherd...] So completely will the Jewish state be shattered by the crooked policy of its leaders.

15—17. The true policy contrasted with the false.

15 re-echoes the great ruling principle of Isaiah's statesmanship: comp. ch. vii. 4, 9, xxviii. 16.

In returning and rest...in quietness and in confidence] The first pair of expressions describes the external policy, the second the attitude of mind, demanded by the occasion. On the one hand, averseness to war (for the sense of *shûbâh* cf. *shûbê milhâmâh* = "averse from war," Mic. ii. 8), renunciation of earthly help and a "calm neutrality" in international affairs: on the other, "restful trust" in Jehovah: in this last, the prophet says, they would have manifested the truest "strength" or courage.

16. *we will flee*] Translate: **we will fly** (against the enemy). The word, which in the next clause (as in every other instance) means "flee," is chosen because in Heb. it resembles in sound the word for "horses."

upon the swift] (coursers). In ch. xxxvi. 8 the Rabshakeh seems to taunt the Judeans with their childish fondness for horsemanship.

be swift. One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one; at 17
the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as [1]a beacon
upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.
And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious 18
unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may
have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgement;
blessed are all they that wait for him.

For [2]the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou 19
shalt weep no more; he will surely be gracious unto thee at

[1] Or, *a mast*
[2] Or, *O people that dwellest in Zion at Jerusalem*

17. Their flight will be disgraceful. The words *at the rebuke of five* seem to weaken the force of the preceding hyperbole; hence some critics would insert "a myriad" in the second clause, after Lev. xxvi. 8; Deut. xxxii. 23; others (Duhm, &c.) take the first clause as an interpolation from the same passages.

beacon means "flag-staff" (elsewhere "mast," cf. ch. xxxiii. 23; Ezek. xxvii. 5).

18 26. On the doubtful genuineness of these verses see the remarks on ch. xxix. 16—24 (p. 236, above). There is a considerable probability that the two sections are from the same hand; but in this case the force of the arguments against Isaiah's authorship is felt even by very cautious scholars (see Whitehouse, pp. 319 f.). In spite of occasional reminiscences of Isaianic ideas and language, the tenor and theology of the passage as a whole seem to point to a situation considerably later than the age of Isaiah.

18 is frequently explained as a concluding threat "Therefore will the Lord wait before having mercy on you": will postpone your deliverance. But this interpretation does violence to the terms of the verse, which is really the introduction of a new section, full of glorious promises. The "waiting" of Jehovah is that of anxious expectancy for the opportune moment of intervention; His "exaltation" denotes His readiness to act. The emendation "he will be silent" for "he will be exalted" is unnecessary. It is difficult, however, to explain the conjunction "therefore," after *v.* 17; unless we can hold that it has adversative force (="even under these circumstances," "nevertheless"). The new passage seems to belong to a different time, and to continue another train of thought: see xxix. 15—24.

a God of judgement] or "justice."

that wait for him] Cf. ch. viii. 17; Ps. xxxiii. 20, &c.

19. The answer to prayer.

For the people shall dwell...] Rather: **For, O people in Zion that dwellest in Jerusalem.**

thou shalt weep no more...gracious] **weep thou shalt not, gracious will he be,** &c.

the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear, he will answer
20 thee. [1]And though the Lord give you the bread of
adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy
[2]teachers [3]be hidden any more, but thine eyes shall see
21 thy [2]teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee,
saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the
22 right hand, and when ye turn to the left. And ye shall
defile the overlaying of thy graven images of silver, and the
plating of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt [4]cast them
away as an [5]unclean thing; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee
23 hence. And he shall give the rain of thy seed, that thou

[1] Or, *And the Lord will give...and thy teachers shall not &c.*
[2] Or, *teacher*
[3] Or, *hide themselves*
[4] Heb. *scatter.*
[5] Heb. *menstruous.*

he will answer] **he has answered** (ch. lxv. 24; Mark xi. 24).

20, 21. The restoration of religious privileges and instruction.

20. *the bread of adversity and the water of affliction*] (cf. 1 Ki. xxii. 27) the most meagre necessities of existence. The reference is to the period of distress (perhaps a siege) which *precedes* the great deliverance.

shall not thy teachers be hidden any more] Rather: **shall not thy Teacher** (God) **hide himself** (nearly as marg.). The alternative rendering "teachers" is no doubt possible, but the verb is in the singular, and the conception of Jehovah as the personal teacher of His people, although surprising, gives the fullest meaning to the expressions of this verse and the next, and is not too exalted for a description of the Messianic age. If the other view be adopted, the reference must be to the prophets, who are now driven into concealment, but shall then freely appear in public. But such an anticipation has no parallel in Messianic prophecy, and certainly receives no light from the circumstances of Isaiah's time.

21. *thine ears shall hear a word behind thee*] that of Jehovah, walking like a Father behind His children. Cf. xxix. 18.

when ye turn...] Whenever your steps leave the straight path of righteousness, the warning voice will check you.

22. The renunciation of idolatry.

ye shall defile] i.e. "desecrate" (2 Ki. xxiii. 8 ff.).

overlaying...plating] An idol consisted of a core of wood or inferior metal, overlaid with a costly layer of silver or gold. The latter part was of course the most valuable, and perhaps also the most sacred (see Deut. vii. 25 f.).

cast them away...] **scatter them** *as an unclean thing*; Ex. xxxii. 20.

23—26. The temporal blessings of the new dispensation.

23. *the rain of thy seed*] the "early rain" falling in the month of October (Zech. x. 1).

shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the ground, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise 24
and the young asses that till the ground shall eat [1]savoury provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. And there shall be upon every lofty mountain, 25
and upon every high hill, rivers *and* streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover 26
the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

[1] Heb. *salted.*

bread of the increase of the ground] "bread-corn (xxviii. 28) the produce of the ground." Cf. ch. xxxvii. 30.

24. Comp. St Paul's "Doth God take care for oxen?" (1 Cor. ix. 9).

savoury provender] **salted fodder**, i.e. the best fodder (Job vi. 5) mixed with grains of salt. The devotion of cattle to salt in any form is well known. Gesenius quotes an Arabic proverb which says that "sweet fodder is the camel's bread, salted fodder is his comfit." The word for "fodder" (*bĕlîl*) is usually explained as "mixture" (*farrago*) of corn with beans, vetches, &c. According to Wetzstein (in Delitzsch's *Comm.* on this verse) it means "ripe barley." In Syriac it denotes "fresh corn."

winnowed with the shovel and with the fan] i.e. prepared with the utmost care. The modern Arabic equivalent of the word rendered "fan" denotes a six-pronged fork (Wetzstein, in Delitzsch's *Isaiah*, 2nd ed.). As to the process see on ch. xvii. 13.

25. Even the arid slopes of the hills of Palestine shall then flow with water.

in a day of [*the*] *great slaughter, when* [*the*] *towers fall*] The art. is not expressed in the Heb. We have here an echo of Isaiah's prophecy of the Day of the Lord in ch. ii. 12–15, but evidently hardened into an eschatological dogma familiar to the readers addressed.

26. *moon* and *sun* are, in the original, poetic epithets (see on xxiv. 23). According to the Book of Enoch (lxxii. 37, lxxiii. 3) the light of the sun is sevenfold that of the full moon.

as the light of seven days] the light of a whole week concentrated in one day. But the clause is wanting in the LXX., and being redundant is probably a late gloss.

bindeth up the hurt...wound] Cf. ch. i. 6.

27 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning
with his anger, and in thick rising smoke: his lips are full
28 of indignation, and his tongue is as a devouring fire: and
his breath is as an overflowing stream, that reacheth even

27—33. This highly coloured description of the overthrow of Assyria is addressed to believers (*v.* 29), and therefore can hardly have been part of Isaiah's message to the nation at any period of his career. That it expresses substantially his own personal faith and anticipation at the time of Sennacherib's invasion is true; and there are no decisive objective grounds for denying its genuineness. At the same time there are features of the poem not altogether easy to reconcile with the assumption of Isaiah's authorship. Not only does the imagery shew a "want of sobriety which is unlike Isaiah," but the whole passage breathes a spirit of gloating exultation over the horrors of the judgement for which there seems to be no room in Isaiah's profoundly ethical conception of the vindication of the moral order by the punishment of the Assyrians. The literary and linguistic arguments (see Cheyne, *Introd.*, pp. 199 ff.) are of less weight, and there is no reason to doubt that the prophecy belongs to the Assyrian crisis of the eighth century. It may, however, as Staerk suggests, be the work not of Isaiah himself, but of a disciple, who shared his master's outlook without attaining to his breadth of spiritual insight.

27, 28. These verses describe the Theophany, in which Jehovah appears to destroy the Assyrians, cf. Jud. v. 4, 5; Ps. xviii. 7 ff., l. 3—5; Hab. iii. 3 ff.

27. *the name of the LORD*] appears here to be synonymous with what is elsewhere called the "glory of Jehovah" (cf. the parallelism, ch. lix. 19; Ps. cii. 15), i.e. the visible manifestation of His presence. It may have the same sense in ch. xviii. 7, the Temple of the future being conceived as the scene of a perpetual Theophany (Ezek. xliii. 2 ff.). Amongst the later Jews the expression "the Name" was commonly used, out of reverence, to avoid the use of the Tetragrammaton (cf. Lev. xxiv. 11).

cometh from far] In Jud. v. 4; Deut. xxxiii. 2 (cf. Hab. iii. 3) the Theophany comes from Seir or Sinai; here its origin is left indefinite. Jehovah's coming is like that of the thundercloud which appears on the distant horizon, no eye having observed the mysterious process by which it was formed. In what follows the figure of the storm is inseparably blended with an anthropomorphic representation of Jehovah.

burning...smoke] lit. "burning is his anger, and a heaviness the uplifting." The latter expression denotes the bank of cloud slowly, and as if heavily, lifting itself from the horizon.

full of indignation] Perhaps "full of angry foam."

28. *and his breath is as an overflowing stream, that reacheth* (lit. "divideth") *even unto the neck*] (cf. ch. viii. 8). The thunderstorm is accompanied by waterspouts which in an instant transform the dry wadis into raging torrents.

unto the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of [1]vanity:
and a bridle that causeth to err *shall be* in the jaws of the
peoples. Ye shall have a song as in the night [2]when a holy 29
feast is kept: and gladness of heart, as when one goeth
with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the
Rock of Israel. And the LORD shall cause his glorious 30
voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his
arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and the flame of a

[1] Or, *destruction* [2] Or, *when a feast is hallowed*

to sift (lit. "swing") [*the*] *nations with the sieve of vanity* (or "annihilation")] i.e. to sift them until they are annihilated. But the word rendered "sieve" (which does not occur elsewhere) is etymologically connected with the noun and verb for "sacrificial swinging" (see on *v.* 32); and the metaphor here may be derived from the priestly act by which victims were dedicated to God, — in primitive times perhaps to destruction.

and a bridle...peoples] i.e. Jehovah, by His providence, turns the Assyrians aside from their purpose, and frustrates their enterprise. Such is the general idea; but the want of a verb in the Hebrew shews that there is some confusion in the text.

29 32. Songs of rejoicing arise within the city, while the Assyrians are slaughtered under its walls.

29. *Ye shall have a song*] lit. "the song shall be to you." Undoubtedly, the song is sung by the Israelities, not by an angelic choir, as is suggested by Duhm. The song will be like that **in the night of purification for a feast.** The feast is thought by some to be the Passover, the only festival which, so far as we know, included a nocturnal celebration, in the O.T. times. But the Paschal night-service was to be observed "in trepidation" (Ex. xii. 11; Deut. xvi. 3); and it is doubtful if it could be used as an emblem of national rejoicing. Since *the* Feast (*hag*) *par excellence* in pre-Exilic Israel was the joyous Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles), it is more natural to find here an allusion to a nocturnal ceremony of preparation for that festival, of which, however, we have no other record.

as when one goeth with a pipe] Or: **like his who marches with a flute**, &c. (cf. 1 Ki. i. 40); in other words, "who takes part in a festal procession to the Temple" (Ps. xlii. 4).

the Rock of Israel] 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

30. *his glorious voice*] Perhaps: **the majesty of His thunder** (Ps. xxix. 3 ff.).

the lighting down] **the descent.** The word probably comes from the (Aramaic) verb used in Ps. xxxviii. 2.

with the indignation of his *anger*] **in furious anger.**

devouring fire, with [1]a blast, and tempest, and hailstones.
31 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be
32 broken in pieces, [2]which smote with a rod. And every
[3]stroke of the [4]appointed staff, which the LORD shall lay
upon him, shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of
33 shaking will he fight with them. For a Topheth is pre-

[1] Or, *crashing*
[2] Or, *with his rod shall he smite* him
[3] Heb. *passing.*
[4] Or, *staff of doom* (Heb. *foundation*)

a blast] The noun (from a verb meaning "to shatter") does not occur elsewhere; it is probably a poetic name for a storm, or **cloud-burst.**

For *tempest* read **rain storm.**

31. Assyria is here named for the first time as the object of the judgement. The *voice* of Jehovah is the thunder, as in *v.* 30. For *broken in pieces* render **panic-stricken.**

which smote with a rod] (cf. ch. x. 24). Or, with a change of vowel-points, "with the rod shall he be smitten." The words, however, are probably the first part of a marginal gloss, continued in the relative clause "which Jehovah shall cause to rest upon him," now imbedded in *v.* 32 (Duhm).

32. The verse is full of hopeless obscurities. Omitting the interpolated clause (see last note), it reads literally somewhat as follows: **And every crossing of the staff of foundation (?) shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of wave-offering will he fight with them.** The expression "staff of foundation" is utterly devoid of meaning; the emendation "staff of correction" (Prov. xxii. 15) only replaces one singular expression by another, and is besides too easy to be worth much; and Duhm's rendering, "every passing-over of the staff shall be *his chastisement*" (מוּסָרָה) is but a counsel of despair. The phrase *battles of shaking* is also difficult. "Battles of the swinging (of Jehovah's hand)," as in xix. 16, is the construction usually put upon it, but the sense is rhetorically weak. The word for "shaking" is the technical term for the "wave-offering" in the Law (e.g. Lev. vii. 30); hence we render with Ewald "battles of wave-offering," i.e. battles in which Assyria is devoted to destruction. A still better sense would be obtained from a suggestion of Schmidt, that the Heb. for "battles" is a corruption of some word meaning "songs" or "hymns": "hymns such as accompany the wave-offering."

33. *For a Topheth is prepared of old*] Render: **For a burning-place is already laid out.** Topheth is the name of a spot in the valley of the son of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where human sacrifices were offered to the god Melek or Molech (2 Kings xxiii. 10; Jer. vii. 31 f., xix. 6, 13). According to Prof. Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, p. 377) the word was originally pronounced *Tŏphath*, and, like its equivalents in Aramaic and Arabic, meant simply "fireplace." This view seems preferable to the common derivation, which explains it as a

pared of old; yea, for the king it is made ready: he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on **31**
horses; and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look

term of contempt ("spitting," Job xvii. 6); and it accounts for the generic sense which the word undoubtedly has in this passage (where, however, a bye-form *taphtch* is used). "The Topheth" was so-called because the most distinctive feature of the revolting rites there practised was the burning of the victims in a great pit dug in the ground, which constituted the "fireplace."

yea, for the king it is made ready] lit. "even it is prepared for the king" (not "even for the king it is prepared"). The "king" might be either the king of Assyria, or the god "Melek" (Molech), or a play of words alluding to both. But a "witty allusion" in such a passage leads us to suspect the hand of a glossator. The objection to understanding it of the king of Assyria is that the emphasis rests on "it" and not on "the king."

the pile (**pyre**) *thereof*] Cf. Ezek. xxiv. 9. For *fire* some other word must have been used; perhaps "coals of fire" (גחלי omitted before אש); Duhm substitutes קש, "stubble."

doth kindle it] **burns within it.**

Ch. XXXI. The Impossibility of Human Help: the Certainty of Divine Protection.

The alliance with Egypt (now apparently consummated) is again the starting point of this fifth "Woe." It contains only two short oracles.

i. *vv.* 1—3. The false confidence of the politicians in the strength of Egypt (1) is rebuked by an appeal to the infinite contrast between the wisdom and resources of the Almighty and all human craft and power (2, 3).

ii. *vv.* 4—9. Jehovah, while crushing all human efforts to defeat his purpose of judgement (4), will yet in the last extremity spare and protect Jerusalem (5). [If Israel would but repent and turn to Him whom they have forsaken, Who alone is God, able to save them! (6, 7).] The Assyrian shall be destroyed by Jehovah's personal intervention (8, 9).

1. Woe to them that put their trust in the horses and chariots of Egypt! The Jews were painfully conscious of their weakness in cavalry as compared with the Assyrians, and this was one of the considerations that made a league with Egypt so attractive in their eyes (see ch. xxx. 16, xxxvi. 8, 9). Egypt was always renowned in antiquity for its

not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!
2 Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call
back his words: but will arise against the house of the
evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.
3 Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses
flesh, and not spirit: and when the LORD shall stretch out
his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is

strength in this arm (Hom. *Iliad* IX. 383: Diodorus, I. 45). To the prophets horses and chariots were in themselves objectionable as embodiments of irreligious militarism (cf. ch. ii. 7): they were of course doubly so when obtained through compacts with foreign states.

neither seek the LORD] i.e. seek His counsel (xxx. 2).

2, 3. A demonstration of the folly of trusting Egypt rather than Jehovah.

2. *Yet he also is wise*] as well as the shrewd diplomatists who have negotiated this treaty! The words are ironical, yet they have a serious meaning; the prophet, alone in his view of the political situation, reassures himself by thinking of the transcendent wisdom of Jehovah and the fixity of His purpose.

and will bring evil] Rather, **brings trouble** (cf. Am. iii. 6) in consequence of His wisdom.

and will not call back (better: **and hath not recalled**) *his words*] The "words" are such prophecies as XXVIII. 16 ff., XXIX. 14 ff., XXX. 13 f., 16 ff. The delay in the fulfilment of his predictions was to Isaiah neither a reason for doubting his own inspiration nor an evidence of infirmity of purpose on the part of Jehovah.

the house of [*the*] *evil-doers* is Judah (ch. i. 4); their *help* (i.e. "helpers") is Egypt.

3. *men, and not God...flesh, and not spirit*] In these antitheses Isaiah formulates his religious conception of history. The present crisis has not been brought about by the mere collision of earthly forces (Egypt, Assyria, Judah); faith discerns in it the operation of a spiritual principle, and knows that that principle must be victorious. "Spirit" is the energetic indestructible element in the universe, by which all life is sustained; and that which is distinctive of the teaching of Isaiah and the prophets generally is (1) the identification of this principle with the moral purpose of Jehovah, and (2) the assertion of the supremacy of the spiritual, thus ethically conceived, over the material. That men could not stand against God, or flesh against spirit, Isaiah's contemporaries did not need to be taught; what separated him from his hearers was the conviction that there is but one Divine Person, and one spiritual power in the universe, viz. Jehovah and His moral government as revealed in the consciousness of the prophet. Hence he continues:—**When Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, the helper** (Egypt) **shall stumble, and the holpen** (Judah) **shall fall; and together they shall all of them perish.**

holpen shall fall, and they all shall fail together. For thus 4
saith the LORD unto me, Like as when the lion growleth and
the young lion over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be
called forth against him, he will not be dismayed at their
voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the
LORD of hosts come down to fight [1]upon mount Zion, and
[1]upon the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the LORD of 5

[1] Or, *against*

4—9. A separate oracle, but connected in thought with *vv.* 1—3. Jerusalem's extremity is Jehovah's opportunity.

4. The verse reads: **As the lion growls, and the young lion over his prey, against whom the whole band of shepherds has been called out he is not terrified by their cry, nor takes any heed of their shouting so Jehovah of Hosts will come down,** &c. Compare with this truly Homeric simile *Il.* XVIII. 161 ff.:

> ὡς δ' ἀπὸ σώματος οὔτι λέοντ' αἴθωνα δύνανται
> ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι μέγα πεινάοντα δίεσθαι,
> ὥς ῥα τὸν οὐκ ἐδύναντο δύω Αἴαντε κορυστὰ
> Ἕκτορα Πριαμίδην ἀπὸ νεκροῦ δειδίξασθαι.

Comp. also XII. 299 ff. It is unfortunate that so graphic an image should be susceptible of two diametrically opposite interpretations. According to most commentators it expresses Jehovah's determination to defend Jerusalem against the Assyrians. The figure would certainly be "ill-chosen" if the lion were represented as protecting his prey and the shepherds as anxious to destroy it. It may no doubt be answered to this objection that the prey counts for nothing in the similitude, and that the only point of comparison is the formidable prowess of the king of the forest. Still, the more natural interpretation is that Jehovah (through the Assyrians, as in xxix. 3, 4) will hold Jerusalem helpless in His power as the lion holds his prey; though the noisy crowd of shepherds (the Egyptians, the "helpers" of *v.* 3) try to scare Him away. The advantage of the other view is that it gets rid of the difficult transition from threatening to promise at the beginning of *v.* 5; but that (in view of xxix. 4, 5) is not a sufficient reason for straining the figure in the way proposed. The whole issue narrows itself down to the sense of the preposition *'al* after the verb for "fight," on which see the next note.

to fight upon mount Zion, and upon] Marg.: **to fight against...and against.** The verb (*ṣābā'*) is not that usually rendered "fight," and is very rare in this sense. In every case (xxix. 7, 8; Num. xxxi. 7; Zec. xiv. 12) save one (Num. xxxi. 42) it is followed by *'al*, with the meaning "against." That of course is not decisive of the sense of the preposition here; but it forms an additional reason for taking the simile of the lion and the shepherds in its natural sense.

5. Jehovah's protection of Jerusalem is expressed by a very different,

hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver *it*, he
6 will pass over and preserve *it*. Turn ye unto him [1]from
7 whom [2]ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel. For
in that day they shall cast away every man his idols of
silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have
8 made unto you for a sin. Then shall the Assyrian fall with
the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of men, shall
devour him: and he shall flee from the sword, and his
9 young men shall become tributary. And his rock shall pass

[1] Or, *from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted*
[2] Heb. *they*.

and even more ambiguous figure—that of birds circling over their nests. To take the simile to be that of birds of prey preparing to swoop down on their quarry, and then to transpose the two symbols and reverse their natural import (reading 5*a*, 4*b*, 4*a*, 5*b*), as ingeniously proposed by Schmidt, yields no appreciable advantage. The unmediated abruptness of the transition has simply to be faced—and justified by reference to xxix. 1—8.

he will protect.. preserve it] **protecting and delivering, sparing and rescuing.**

pass over] The verb is that from which the word *Pesaḥ* (Passover) is derived; it occurs again only in Ex. xii. 13, 23, 27.

6 contains the only summons to repentance in this whole series of discourses. It is connected with *v.* 7; and the thought is that the approaching deliverance will be a decisive manifestation of the sole deity of Jehovah, which will put idolatry to shame, and therefore the prophet, or more probably a later writer, calls on his hearers to realise the magnitude of their sin in having forsaken the one true God.

have deeply revolted] cf. i. 5.

7. Comp. xxx. 22, xvii. 8, ii. 8 and esp. ii. 20.

8. The discomfiture of the Assyrians will be accomplished by Jehovah Himself. The connexion is with *v.* 5. Render **And Assyria shall fall**, &c.

not of man...men (see on ch. ii. 9)] Lit. "of a Not-man...Not-mortal," i.e. a superhuman sword.

and he shall flee...young men] Or, **And if he should flee...his young men**. This is inconsistent with the first part of the verse, which obviously contemplates the utter annihilation of the Assyrians. We must conclude that the text has again been amplified by a later editor.

shall become tributary] "be subjected to bond-service," as 1 Kings ix. 21 f., &c.

9. *And his rock shall pass away*] The clause is very difficult. R.V. takes "his rock" as subj., "rock" being a figurative designation either of the king of Assyria or its national deity. This view has nothing to commend it. A.V. gives a tolerable sense, which might

away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

be paraphrased thus: "he shall overpass his rock(-refuge) from terror," the image being that of a hunted animal, which misses its accustomed hiding-place in its fright. Duhm has now abandoned this (his former) explanation, in favour of a radically reconstructed text, partly on the basis of the LXX.

his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign] This rendering might be explained by ch. xviii. 3: the Assyrian officers shall be affrighted at the signal which Jehovah sets up. Another rendering is: **his officers shall be frighted away from the standard**, i.e. "even the officers shall desert the standard in panic" (a pregnant construction).

whose fire is... Jerusalem] Better: **who hath a fire in Zion and a furnace** (lit. "oven") **in Jerusalem**. There is perhaps an allusion here to the meaning of "Ariel" in ch. xxix. 1 ff. The "oven" is an emblem of the divine anger in Ps. xxi. 9; perhaps also in Gen. xv. 17.

CH. XXXII. 1—8. THE IDEAL COMMONWEALTH OF THE MESSIANIC AGE.

This passage, although treated by many expositors as the continuation of ch. xxxi., bears all the marks of an independent prophecy. Its insertion in the present group of discourses is sufficiently explained by the picture it gives of a reformed upper class, in contrast with the irreligious and unscrupulous nobility against whom the previous chapters have been mainly directed. The time of its actual composition cannot be determined, but it is perhaps most naturally assigned to the close of Isaiah's ministry, when his mind was occupied with the hope of the ideal future. Much has been made of the fact that the figure of the Messianic King (*v.* 1) is less idealised than in the great prophecies of ch. ix. 1—6 and xi. 1—4. But this circumstance is easily accounted for by the leading idea of the prophecy (which is the transformation of social relationships), and cannot be safely used as a criterion of date. Still less does it furnish an argument against the Isaianic authorship of the passage. It is true, however, that *vv.* 6—8 in their laboured didactic style, and in the terms employed, differ widely from anything else in the acknowledged writings of Isaiah; and the opinion of Duhm that these three verses are a late addition to a genuine oracle of Isaiah has much to recommend it.

The contents are as follows:—

(1) *vv.* 1, 2. A perfectly just and beneficent government will be established; king and nobles alike being endowed with the virtues necessary for their office, and yielding protection to the poor.

(2) *vv.* 3—5. Public opinion also will be enlightened and purified; the people will no longer be misled by false and superficial judgements,

32 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes
2 shall rule in judgement. And a man shall be as an hiding
place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as
rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great
3 rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall
not be [1]dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.
4 The heart also of the [2]rash shall understand knowledge,

[1] Or, *closed* [2] Heb. *hasty.*

but even the most ignorant will be gifted with the faculty of sound moral discernment (3 f.). The consequence of this will be that "the aristocracy of birth and wealth will be replaced by an aristocracy of character" (Delitzsch); men will find their proper level and be estimated at their true worth (5).

(3) *vv.* 6—8. To this is appended an analysis of the two contrasted types, the "churl" and the true nobleman.

1, 2. It is characteristic of Isaiah that the renovation of society is represented as commencing at the top, with the king and aristocracy. (Cf. ch. i. 26, iii. 1—7.) The ideal king has already been described (ch. ix. 6, 7, xi. 1—4) as supernaturally endowed with the virtues of a perfect ruler; here the emphasis lies on the manifestation of these qualities in righteous government; and this, according to the constitutional principles of Isaiah's time, required an order of state officials animated by the same spirit as the king himself.

1. *and princes shall rule*] Some render emphatically: "and as for princes—they shall rule," on account of a preposition in the Heb.; but this is probably only a copyist's error. On "righteousness" and "judgement," see ch. i. 21; cf. xi. 4, 5.

2. For *a man* read **each one** (of the princes). The meaning of the figure is that every great man, instead of being a tyrant and oppressor of the poor (xxix. 23 f.), shall be a protection against calamity and a source of beneficent activity.

from the tempest] **from the rain storm**; ch. iv. 6.

the shadow of a great (lit. "heavy") *rock*] cooler than that of a tree. Frequently cited parallels (since Gesenius) are the σκιὴ πεταλη of Hesiod (*Works*, 589) and the "saxea umbra" of Virgil (*Georg.* III. 145).

3, 4. The quickening of the moral perceptions of the people. Comp. ch. xxix. 18, 24, xxx. 20 f.

3. *shall not be dim*] **shall not be closed** (marg.). The verb, although disguised in the pointing (read תְּשֵׁעֶנָה), is no doubt the same as that used in ch. vi. 10, xxix. 10 (lit. "smear"). The curse there pronounced shall be removed.

4. *the rash*] i.e. the hasty, inconsiderate person, who constantly blurts out crude and ill-judged opinions. The *stammerers*, on the other hand, are those who, even when their thoughts are right, lack the gift of clear

and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The [1]vile person shall be no more called [2]liberal, 5
nor the [3]churl said to be bountiful. For the [1]vile person 6
will speak [4]villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the 7
churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the [5]meek with lying words, even when the needy speaketh

[1] Or, *fool* See 1 Sam. xxv. 25. [2] Or, *noble*
[3] Or, *crafty* [4] Or, *folly* [5] Or, *poor*

utterance. To the former class is promised "understanding," to the latter the power to speak promptly and "plainly" (lit. **lucidities**). Sound judgement and fluent speech combine to form a good popular orator. Duhm imagines that Isaiah is thinking of differences of temperament he had observed among his own disciples.

5. True and false nobility shall no longer be confounded because of artificial caste-distinctions.

The vile person] **The fool**; see the typical specimen, Nabal by name and by nature, in 1 Sam. xxv.

liberal] Better: **noble** (in rank). The word denotes, first, one of generous, self-sacrificing disposition; and then one of noble degree; Num. xxi. 18 and often.

The word rendered *churl* occurs only here (and *v.* 7), and its meaning is uncertain. The view adopted by most commentators derives it from a root signifying guile or craftiness (hence Cheyne well renders **knave**). *bountiful* represents another rare word (only Job xxiv. 19 [E.V. "rich"]), perhaps **lordly**.

6—8. The two types contrasted in their conduct.

6. The characteristics of the "fool." Render: **For a fool speaks folly and his heart works** (LXX. "meditates") **mischief, to practise impiety** (cf. ix. 17) **and to speak error** (xxix. 24) **against Jehovah**, &c. The fool here depicted is a free-thinker, a practical atheist, as in Ps. xiv. 1; the baneful effect of his principles is seen in his conduct towards his fellow-men, in his pitiless and cruel selfishness.

to make empty...] to deprive the destitute of their scanty subsistence.

7. *The instruments*] i.e. the weapons or methods, of the knave. The word is chosen because of its close similarity to that for "knave" (*kōlai —kelāw*). On these machinations of the knave, see ch. xxix. 21.

even when the needy speaketh right] in a forensic sense (="speaks with right on his side"). But it is better to take a hint from the LXX. and with a slight change of text to read **and with a word the needy in judgement** (so Duhm).

8 right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and [1]in liberal things shall he continue.

[1] Or, *by liberal things shall he stand*

8. *But the liberal* (**the noble man**) *deviseth liberal* (**noble**) *things*—and thereby evinces genuine nobility.

in liberal things...] Better: **in noble things doth he continue.** His generous impulses are sustained in his conduct.

Ch. XXXII. 9—20. To the Women of Jerusalem.

Like previous sections this passage is divided into two parts,—the announcement of judgement on Jerusalem, and a description of the Messianic salvation (see the analysis below). It presents, however, two remarkable peculiarities: (1) there is no reference to the overthrow of the Assyrians, and (2) it contemplates a complete destruction of Jerusalem and a protracted desolation of the land. For these reasons the first part of the prophecy (*vv.* 9—14) must be assigned to the early period of Isaiah's ministry, while he still looked forward to the ruin of the capital (cf. ch. iii. 16—iv. 1, v. 1—7, 14). The latter portion (*vv.* 15—20) presents some affinities with other members of this group of discourses (ch. xxviii.—xxxi.), and was probably written much later than the address to the women. That it is a genuine utterance of Isaiah's there is no serious reason to doubt.

The contents of the section are as follows:—

i. *vv.* 9—14. A threatening oration, addressed to the women of Jerusalem. The introduction (*v.* 9) shews that what roused the ire of the prophet was the careless unconcern and indifference of the women in face of the warnings he had uttered. He endeavours to shake them out of their light-hearted security by the announcement that "the ingathering shall not come" (10). So clear is the vision of calamity that he calls on his hearers to adopt the attitude of mourners over the ravaged vineyards, the desolate fields, and the deserted palaces of the "jubilant city" (11—14).

ii. *vv.* 15—20. Out of this state of collapse and ruin there will ultimately arise, but after an indefinite period, a new world. Under the vivifying influence of the divine spirit external nature will be renewed (15), righteousness will dwell in the land (16), and its blessed fruits will be undisturbed peace and security (17, 18). An unexpected allusion to the judgement (19) somewhat mars the continuity of the passage, which ends with a prophetic felicitation of the peaceful and industrious peasantry who inherit the golden age (20).

9. The women are addressed partly as representing best certain aspects of the public mind, luxury and complacent ease (ch. iii. 16 ff.; Am. iv. 1 ff.); partly because of their function as mourners in seasons of calamity (Jer. ix. 20). But it is not too fanciful to suppose that the immediate occasion of the oracle was a vintage feast (see *vv.* 9, 11) in

Rise up, ye women that are at ease, *and* hear my voice; 9
ye [1]careless daughters, give ear unto my speech. [2]For days 10
beyond a year shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for
the vintage shall fail, the ingathering shall not come.
Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye 11
careless ones: strip you, and make you bare, and [3]gird
sackcloth upon your loins. They shall smite upon the 12
breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. Upon 13

[1] Heb. *confident.*
[2] Or, *After a year and days* Heb. *Days above a year.*
[3] Or, *put a girdle upon*

the vicinity of Jerusalem, where the prophet has seen the happy, light-hearted maidens joining in the dance with which that joyous season was celebrated (Jud. xxi. 21).

With the introduction comp. xxviii. 23.

that are at ease...careless] (or, **confident**) cf. Am. vi. 1.

10. *days beyond a year*] "in little more than a year," probably a current popular phrase like "year and day." Both A.V. and R.V. regard the expression as accus. of duration, but the context shews that it fixes the point of time when ease and security give place to anxiety. Comp. the less definite note of time in ch. xxix. 1.

The feature of the judgement which is emphasised is the failure of the vintage and the fruit harvest (*ingathering*); what follows shews that this is not the result of natural causes, but of a wholesale devastation of the land. The significance of the prediction would depend greatly on the season of the year at which it was uttered; on any natural interpretation of his words, the prophet means to assert that the next year's vintage may be gathered, but not many more.

11. The speaker calls on his female auditors at once to assume the garb of mourners; so certain is the calamity. The word for "tremble" is in the masc. gender in the original, a not uncommon irregularity (Am. iv. 1; Mic. i. 13, &c.). Indeed the next verse presents an example.

strip you, and make you bare]—as Arabian women occasionally do in a paroxysm of grief or terror.

gird sackcloth *upon your loins*] Cf. ch. iii. 24; 1 Ki. xxi. 27; 2 Ki. vi. 30; Job xvi. 15.

The words "be troubled," "strip," "make bare" and "gird" represent anomalous forms in the Hebrew, which are the despair of grammarians. The imperative no doubt gives the right sense.

12. *They shall smite upon the breasts*] The construction is difficult. The verb is a masculine plural participle and signifies strictly "to mourn." The word for "breasts" might by a slight change of points be read as "fields"; hence some commentators think that the reference

the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers;
14 yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: for the
palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted;
[1]the hill and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever,
15 a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the spirit be
poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become
a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

[1] Or, *Ophel*

to the women is here abandoned, and render, "men shall mourn for the fields." If the R.V. is right we must suppose that the word "mourn" (like the Greek κόπτεσθαι) meant originally "smite upon (the breast)" and is here used in its literal sense. The clause would be somewhat more easily construed if read as the conclusion of *v.* 11 (Duhm, "smiting on the breasts"), but even with this change the masculine gender is exceedingly harsh.

13. *Upon the land...briers*] It is perhaps better to take this as continuing *v.* 12, rendering thus: **for the (cultivated) land of my people, which goes up in thorns and briers** (cf. ch. v. 6); **yea, for all**, &c. (The verb "goes up" is fem. and must have as its subj. the fem. "land"; "thorns" and "briers" are masc.)

the joyous city] (see on ch. xxii. 2) may be a genitive depending on "houses," or may be a parallel phrase, governed by "for."

14. Render: **For the palace is forsaken, the tumult of the city is a solitude** (as in ch. vi. 12), &c. The tenses are prophetic perfects.

the hill and the watch-tower] The first word is *'Ophel*, the name of the southern projection of the hill on which the temple stood (Neh. iii. 26 f., xi. 21; 2 Chr. xxvii. 3, xxxiii. 14), and is doubtless mentioned as the aristocratic quarter of the city, near the royal palace. The word translated "watch-tower" occurs nowhere else, and is of uncertain significance; probably, like Ophel, it denotes a particular locality in the capital.

The verse contains an absolute and explicit prediction of the complete and lasting ("for ever") devastation of Jerusalem. Dillmann's assertion that such an expectation must have been expressed in different language is inexplicable, and his distinction between destruction and desolation is sophistical. Surprising as this idea may be alongside of certain passages in this section of the book, it is not to be explained away. For a complete parallel, we must go back to the early prophecy of ch. v. 14, 17.

15. At last the great transformation of all things will be ushered in by an outpouring of *spirit* (the Heb. has no art.) *from on high*; i.e. from heaven, as in ch. xxxiii. 5. The spirit, conceived as a subtle essence descending upon and then permeating the human world, is said to be "poured out" as in ch. xxix. 10; Ezek. xxxix. 29; Joel ii. 28 f.

Then judgement shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteous- 16
ness shall abide in the fruitful field. And the work of 17
righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteous-
ness quietness and confidence for ever. And my people 18
shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings,
and in quiet resting places. But it shall hail, in the down- 19
fall of the forest; and the city shall be utterly laid low.
Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth 20
the feet of the ox and the ass.

(although different verbs are there used). Any supernatural influence, even when acting to the injury of man, might be so spoken of (ch. xix. 14, xxix. 10), just as a personal "spirit from Jehovah" may be evil or false (1 Sam. xvi. 14; 1 Ki. xxii. 21 ff.). Here the word is used absolutely and denotes the divine principle of life, and especially the power by which the will of God is made to prevail in human society (*vv.* 16 f.).

On the second half of the verse see ch. xxix. 17.

16. "Judgement" and "righteousness," the foundations of social order (ch. i. 21, 26 f., xxviii. 17), shall then be established throughout the land. The "wilderness" (i.e. untilled pasture-land) is not annihilated, only pushed further into the desert proper; even there the reign of right extends.

17, 18. The consequence of this supremacy of righteousness is universal tranquillity and security, a contrast to the false carnal security denounced in *vv.* 9, 11.

17. *work* and *effect* are synonyms; both mean literally "work," and both have the sense of "effect" (the latter only here used in this sense).

quietness and confidence] cf. ch. xxx. 15.

19. *it shall hail*] Hail is a familiar Isaianic symbol of divine judgement (ch. xxviii. 2, 17, xxx. 30); but it seems out of place here; moreover a *verb* "to hail" does not elsewhere occur. With a slight emendation (ירד for ברד), the verse reads: **And down shall come with a downfall the forest, and in lowliness shall the city be laid low.** According to most commentators the "forest" is an emblem of Assyria, as in ch. x. 18 f., 33 f. But this is suggested by nothing in the context, and the "city" in the next line cannot be Nineveh, which is never referred to by Isaiah, and is far from his thoughts here. The verse as a whole must (if genuine) be taken as an announcement of judgement on Jerusalem; but it comes in so awkwardly between *vv.* 18 and 20, that it may not unreasonably be regarded as an interpolation.

20. The prophet apostrophises the happy agricultural population of the renovated land of Israel. The sentiment may be in part due to his own delight in the avocations of the husbandman, but it has to be remembered that agricultural prosperity naturally holds a prominent place in Messianic prophecy, as the antithesis to the false refinements and military pomp of the civilisation that is to be swept away. The

features of the description are, the happiness of the people, the abundance of water for the irrigation of the fields, and immunity from danger, so that "the ox and the ass" can be safely driven out to pasture, without fear of their not returning (cf. ch. i. 3).

Ch. XXXIII. The Present Distress and the Future Glory of Jerusalem.

The last of the six "Woes" (see p. 218) is not addressed, like the others, to the ungodly rulers of Judah, but to some unnamed tyrant and "spoiler," by whom the land has been reduced to the utmost straits. The course of thought is as follows:—

i. *vv.* 1—13 contain the prophet's appeal to Jehovah against the oppressors of his country. Commencing with a threat of retribution on the cruel and treacherous foe (*v.* 1), he turns in supplication to God, the only hope of Israel in this time of trouble (2—6). At present the city is in the utmost distress through some perfidious act of the enemy; and the whole land lies waste, mourning in sympathy with its inhabitants (7—9).—But again the prophet's faith rises triumphant in the midst of danger; the voice of Jehovah is heard announcing the swift annihilation of the invaders (10—13).

ii. *vv.* 14—24. The effects of Jehovah's appearing: *first* on the two classes within the community;—the ungodly, who are seized with terror (14), and the righteous who dwell securely with the consuming fire of divine holiness (15, 16): *second* (17—24) in the inbringing of the Messianic dispensation, when the present danger shall be but a distant memory (18, 19). The description includes: the vision of the "King in his beauty," and a far-stretching peaceful land (17); the perfect security of Jerusalem, protected by Jehovah (20, 21); freedom from disease and forgiveness of sins, as privileges of the redeemed people (24).

If the chapter be Isaiah's, there can hardly be two opinions as to the circumstances in which it was composed. The unnamed enemy would necessarily be the Assyrian, and the scene pictured in *v.* 7 (the ambassadors of peace weeping bitterly) would seem to refer to some unrecorded embassy of Hezekiah, which must have returned from Lachish with the alarming intelligence that Sennacherib, violating every consideration of honour, insisted on the surrender of the capital. The prophecy would thus belong to the eventful period described in ch. xxxvi. f. (see Introd., pp. xxii f.). To this theory, which is in many ways attractive, there are serious objections arising from the character of the passage. The style and imagery are both unlike Isaiah's, and the pathetic and plaintive tone of *vv.* 2, 8 f. is hardly in keeping with the decisiveness which marks all his utterances. Such a prayer as that in *v.* 2, where the author identifies himself with his people, is without parallel in the acknowledged writings of Isaiah. Moreover the eschatological conceptions, and the literary affinities with late writings, point to the conclusion that at least some parts of the chapter belong to an age

Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; 33
and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously
with thee! When thou hast ceased to spoil, thou shalt be
spoiled; and when thou hast made an end to deal treach-
erously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. O LORD, 2
be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou
their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of
trouble. At the noise of the tumult the peoples are fled; 3
at the lifting up of thyself the nations are scattered. And 4
your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpiller gathereth: as

much more recent than that of Isaiah. Some scholars have tried to explain these characteristics by the hypothesis that the chapter is the composition of a contemporary and disciple of the prophet, or a working up of Isaianic material by a later writer. Critics of a less conservative type pronounce the whole passage to be post-Exilic and refer it to some episode of the Jewish struggle for independence against the Persian or Syrian kings.

1. Ha! destroyer, thyself not destroyed, and traitor whom none has betrayed, &c. The unnamed enemy is described by epithets which recur in ch. xxi. 2, xxiv. 16. The obscurity of the reference is unlike Isaiah who, in the latter part of his career, is usually perfectly explicit in his references to the Assyrian.

when thou hast made an end] The Heb. verb used is supposed to mean "attain"; but it occurs nowhere else, and the reading is at fault. The substitution of a כ for the ך gives the common verb *killah*, "finish," which is the exact sense given by the E.V.

2. From the isolated apostrophe of *v.* 1 the writer turns in prayer to Jehovah. He seems to make himself the spokesman of the community, a thing which Isaiah rarely (if ever) does (see xxxii. 15); nowhere, as here, in a prayer.

be thou their arm] i.e. their strength and defence (Jer. xvii. 5). The force of the pronoun "their" is not clear; perhaps a line referring to Jewish warriors has fallen out (Duhm). On the phrase "every morning," cf. ch. xxviii. 19.

3, 4. Assurance of Jehovah's victory, founded on the great deliverances of the past. The perfects in *v.* 3 may be either those of experience, expressing a general truth often verified in history, or of prophetic assurance. *V.* 4 seems to apply this truth to the present crisis.

3. *At the noise of the tumult*] the convulsions which attend the manifestation of Jehovah. The phrase is found in 1 Ki. xviii. 41 of a rain storm, and in Is. xiii. 4 of a multitudinous host.

4. *And* [*your*] *spoil...as the caterpiller*] Adopting an ingenious emendation of Duhm (שלל כמו instead of שללכם), we get rid of the awkward and misleading "your" of R.V. The last word (meaning

5 locusts leap shall they leap upon it. The LORD is exalted;
for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgement
6 and righteousness. [1]And there shall be stability in thy
times, abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge: the
fear of the LORD is his treasure.
7 Behold, their valiant ones cry without: the ambassadors

[1] Or, *And abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times*

"devourer") is one of many names for the locust. It is sometimes taken as gen. of obj. ("as men gather locusts"), the creature being an article of diet among the poorer classes in the East; but this is opposed to the next clause. On the "leaping" of the locust, see Joel ii. 9, where the same verb is employed.

5, 6. The writer draws encouragement from two thoughts: (1) from the nature of Israel's God; He is a spiritual Being, dwelling on high (cf. ch. lvii. 15), beyond the reach of His enemies: (2) from the spiritual blessings He has conferred on His people. The connexion of these two may be gathered from ch. xxxii. 15; it is the outpouring of "spirit from on high" that has produced the fruit of righteousness in the state. That Israel possesses a religion which is essentially spiritual appears to be the ultimate ground on which the expectation of deliverance is based.

5. *judgement and righteousness* can mean nothing else than personal and civic virtues in the inhabitants of the city. Isaiah could not have written thus of the Jerusalem he knew (cf i. 21); if he were the author the words must express a vivid anticipation of the great change in the national character which is now on the eve of accomplishment.

6. The verse is difficult and indeed untranslateable. R.V. and R.V. marg. and A.V. are about equally successful attempts to make sense of the text as it stands. We must be content here to extract the general idea: that a right religious attitude is the true strength of the nation and the pledge of its deliverance from all dangers. That the words "abundance" and "treasure" were suggested by the depleted treasury of Hezekiah is not a natural supposition.

7—9. The word *Behold* marks a fresh start in the development of the thought. The writer seems to revert to the situation of *v.* 1, and to find in the distress of the present an additional plea for the divine intervention.

7. *their valiant ones*] This word is hopelessly obscure. It is usually translated "God's lions," i.e. "picked warriors, each as fierce as a lion and as invincible as his God" (Cheyne: see on xxix. 1, and cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 20; 1 Chr. xi. 22); and this is probably the sense intended by E.V. Another suggestion is that it is a gentilic name, meaning "inhabitants of Ariel." It is impossible to get beyond conjecture. The

of peace weep bitterly. The high ways lie waste, the way- 8
faring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath
despised the cities, he regardeth not man. The land 9
mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and
withereth away: Sharon is like [1]a desert; and Bashan and
Carmel shake off *their leaves*. Now will I arise, saith the 10
LORD; now will I lift up myself; now will I be exalted.
Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your 11
breath is a fire that shall devour you. And the peoples 12
shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut down, that
are burned in the fire.

[1] Or, *the Arabah*

reading of the text (*'er'ellam*) appears to rest on a false etymology. It should probably be pointed as a simple plural, *'ar'ĕlîm* or (if necessary) *'arĕ'lîm*.

the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly] Cf. ch. xxii. 4. Taken in connexion with the last half of v. 8, these words seem to point to the conclusion of a treaty of peace, which had been shamelessly violated by the enemy. Those immediately responsible for the arrangement are naturally loudest in their expression of dismay. We have no certain knowledge of such negotiations between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, although such an incident might very well have happened then.

8. *The high ways lie waste . . ceaseth*] cf. Jud. v. 6. The sense and connexion are greatly improved by a transposition of this clause and the second half of the verse. If there has been dislocation it becomes probable that *vv.* 8*a*, 9 are interpolated from the margin.

he hath broken the covenant] See on *v.* 7.

he hath despised the cities] For *'ārîm* (cities) Duhm rightly reads *'ēdîm* (witnesses), i.e. the witnesses to the broken treaty.

9. *The* **earth** *mourneth* [*and*] *languisheth*] (cf. ch. xxiv. 4, 7) in sympathy with the distress of God's people. It is the language of poetry. The "earth" is neither the whole world, nor merely the land of Palestine; its equivalent in modern parlance might be "Nature." The spots mentioned are those famous for their luxuriant vegetation, and the standing types of natural beauty and perennial verdure (cf. ch. xxxv. 2; Zech. xi. 2; Cant. vii. 4 f.). The verb *shake off* requires an object to be supplied; "their leaves" (R.V.) is decidedly better than "their fruits" (A.V.).

10–13. Jehovah's answer to the complaint and prayer of His people.

11. Still the words of Jehovah, addressed to the enemy. The present tense would be better than the future. For the first figure see ch. lix. 4; Job xv. 35; Ps. vii. 14.

your breath is a fire that **devours** *you*] Cf. ix. 18, xxv. 4.

12. *as the burnings of lime*] i.e. "as if burned to lime." An image

13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that
14 are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are
afraid; trembling hath surprised the godless ones. Who
among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among
15 us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh
righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the
gain of [1]oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding
of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and

[1] Or, *fraud*

probably suggested by Am. ii. 1. The word rendered *cut down* occurs again only in Ps. lxxx. 16.

13. The signal deliverance of Jerusalem will be a great demonstration to all the world of the omnipotence of Israel's God. The verse is usually taken, and perhaps rightly, as an introduction to the second half of the poem, which deals mainly with the *consequences* of the great act of judgement. Instead of imperatives the LXX. reads (prophetic) perfects, which are perhaps more suitable.

14—16. Being thus assured of a speedy answer to his prayers, the writer proceeds, in language of great force and beauty, to describe the moral effect on the Jewish people.

14. *The sinners...godless ones*] **the impious** (see on ch. ix. 17). An ungodly party still exists, in spite of the fact that Zion is filled with judgement and righteousness (*v.* 5). The reason of their terror is expressed in what immediately follows.

Who among us shall dwell...] The questions are not merely rhetorical, introducing the description of the righteous man, as in Ps. xv. 1, xxiv. 3; but an exclamation put into the mouths of the sinners. They realise at last what Jehovah is, and begin to wonder how they can live with Him who is a consuming fire. The word "dwell" means strictly "sojourn as a protected guest," and is the same as that used in Ps. xv. 1.

everlasting burnings] There is of course no allusion here to eternal punishment. The "fire" is Jehovah's holiness, which in the day of His self-manifestation will consume the worthless elements of the community (see Mal. iii. 2 f.); and this is called eternal because the divine wrath against sin is inexhaustible.

15, 16. A triumphant answer to the fearful self-questionings of the ungodly. The passage closely resembles Ps. xv. 2 ff., xxiv. 4 f. First the character of the true citizen of God's Kingdom is expressed in general terms, and then the details are given in which the character is revealed.

that shaketh his hands] The metaphor is a very suggestive one, the verb being the same as that used in *v.* 9 of the trees shaking off their leaves. All these phrases, indeed, denote the keenest abhorrence of evil.

shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil: he shall dwell on 16
high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks:
his bread shall be given *him*; his waters shall be sure.
Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall 17
behold [1]a far stretching land. Thine heart shall muse on 18
the terror: where is [2]he that counted, where is he that
weighed *the tribute*? where is he that counted the towers?
Thou shalt not see the fierce people, a people of a deep 19

[1] Or, *a land that is very far off* Heb. *a land of far distances.*
[2] Or, *the scribe*

16. *he shall dwell on high*] (lit. "inhabit heights," cf. ch. xxvi. 5), i.e. in absolute security, as is said of Jehovah Himself in *v.* 5. *the munitions of rocks*] inexpugnable rock-fortresses.

bread shall be given...] The image of a siege is still kept up: the righteous inhabits a fortress that shall never be starved into surrender.

17—24. The idea of the perfect security of the righteous man leads by an easy transition to more positive features of the golden age.

17. *the* (or a) *king in his beauty*] The reluctance of many expositors to interpret this phrase of the Messiah is incomprehensible. Delitzsch says that "the king of *v.* 17 is no more the Messiah than the Messiah in Mic. v. 1 [E.V. v. 2] is the same person as the king who is smitten on the cheek in iv. 14 [E.V. v. 1]." But in Micah the humiliated king is *replaced* by the Messiah, and surely the same conception would be in place here. That the king is Jehovah (Vitringa) is no doubt a possible alternative in view of *v.* 22, but since whatever be the date of the passage the Messianic hope must have been a living idea of Jewish religion, there seems no reason for trying to evade what seems the most natural explanation. On the "beauty" of the king see Ps. xlv. 2.

a far stretching land] (lit. "a land of distance"), the spacious and ever-extending dominions of the Messiah (cf. Mic. v. 4; Zech. ix. 10; Ps. lxxii. 8).

18, 19. In those days it will require an effort of imagination to recall the dangers of the present, from which the nation shall have been so suddenly and so marvellously saved. The king is the symbol of national independence.

18. *shall muse on the terror*]—strive to realise its various circumstances which have so completely disappeared.

he that counted...he that weighed] the officers who exacted the tribute.

that counted the towers] calculating the strength of the city with a view to attack it? Duhm renders (with P. Ruben), "the prefect with the taxgatherers,"—an excellent sense, but based on a too precarious alteration of the text.

19. The word rendered "fierce" (*nôāz*) does not occur again, and its meaning is uncertain.

of a deep speech...] (Ez. iii. 5); cf. xxviii. 11; Jer. v. 15.

speech that thou canst not perceive; of a [1]strange tongue
20 that thou canst not understand. Look upon Zion, the city
of our [2]solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet
habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes
whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the
21 cords thereof be broken. But there the LORD will be with
us in majesty, [3]a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein
shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass
22 thereby. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our law-
23 giver, the LORD is our king; he will save us. Thy tacklings

[1] Or, *stammering* [2] Or, *set feasts*
[3] Or, *but in the place...streams there shall go &c.*

of a strange...understand] **babbling with senseless tongue.**

20, 21. The positive side of the picture: the permanent peace and inviolability of Jerusalem, the centre of the true religion: see ch. xxxii. 18.

20. For *solemnities*, render **festal assembly.** The connexion would certainly be improved by the omission of this imperative clause (Duhm).

a tent that shall not be removed] i.e. her people shall no more go into exile. For the figure, cf. Jer. x. 20.

21. Here Jerusalem is contrasted with the great cities of the Nile and Euphrates (cf. Nah. iii. 8), surrounded by an expanse of waters, protecting them from the approach of an enemy: Jehovah is a better defence than this. The key to the right understanding of the verse is the rendering **instead of** (see marg., and cf. Hos. i. 10) for *a place of* in R.V.: we thus get rid of the bizarre *comparison* of Jehovah to a broad river, ploughed by no hostile keel. The details are still obscure. Here it must suffice to quote Duhm's admirable rendering, which is based on a conjectural alteration of the word for "in majesty" to some noun meaning "river," and the less important deletion of the word for "river" as a gloss:

> "But there the River of Jehovah is to us
> instead of far-spreading Nile-streams;
> On it shall go no fleet of galleys,
> neither shall gallant ship pass o'er it."

On the mystic River of Jehovah, see ch. viii. 6; Ezek. xlvii. 5; Joel iv. 18; Zech. xiv. 8; Ps. xlvi. 4 (xxxvi. 8).

22. In the New Jerusalem Jehovah is Judge, Lawgiver, and King, and therefore also its Deliverer from every danger.

23. This verse is entirely out of place. It is a MS. gloss suggested to a reader by the latter part of *v.* 21, probably taken from other writings, in which either Zion or some foreign power was compared to an unseaworthy vessel (cf. Ezek. xxvii. 26 ff.).

Thy tacklings are loosed] Or, **Thy ropes hung slack.**

are loosed; they could not strengthen the foot of their mast, they could not spread the sail: then was the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame took the prey. And the 24
inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

they could not **hold fast** *the foot of their mast, they* **did** *not spread the sail* (or, "the ensign")] The subject here is the ropes; they could not serve the two purposes for which they were intended, supporting the mast and extending the sail. The word rendered *foot* denotes the *μεσόδμη*, the cross-beam into which the mast was let, or else the hole in the keel which received its foot (*ἰστοπέδη*). The rendering *sail* is doubtful. The word means elsewhere "ensign," and one is tempted to translate it "flag." But it is said that ships had no flags in ancient times (Cornill on Ez. xxvii. 7).

the prey of a great spoil] Rather, "prey of spoil in abundance." The figure of the ship is entirely dropped. The expression "prey of spoil" is perhaps to be explained like the Latin *praeda exuviarum*. On the word for "prey" see on ch. ix. 6.

24. The healing of disease and the forgiveness of sin are combined as in Ps. ciii. 3; Matt. ix. 2 ff., &c. To the Old Testament saints sickness was the proof of God's displeasure and of sin unforgiven. Hence in the conception of the Messianic community, the abolition of sickness, the chief evil of life, is the indispensable pledge that guilt is taken away. Cf. Ex. xxiii. 25.

Ch. XXXIV., XXXV. A Prophecy of Vengeance on Edom, and the future Blessedness of Israel.

The oracle consists of two sharply contrasted eschatological pictures, one of judgement, the other of redemption.

i. The first (ch. xxxiv.) commences with a lurid description of the terrors of the last judgement, which is a universal judgement on the nations of the world (*vv.* 1–4). But this passes abruptly (*vv.* 5–17) into a threat of special and fearful vengeance on Edom for its implacable hostility to the people of God (*v.* 8). An indiscriminate slaughter of its population is decreed (5—8); and the land shall be turned into a perpetual desolation, haunted by desert beasts and creatures of demon kind (9—17).

ii. Ch. xxxv. is a beautiful prophecy of Israel's restoration, in imagery borrowed chiefly from the second part of the book of Isaiah. The marvellous transformation of nature, the appearing of Jehovah to deliver His people, the cessation of human infirmities, and the raising of a highway for the redeemed of the Lord to return, lead up to the final promise of everlasting joy and gladness to the ransomed nation, and the banishment of sorrow and sighing from their midst.

The passage is post-Exilic. Although the "perpetual hatred" (Ez.

34 Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye peoples:
let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof; the world, and
2 all things that come forth of it. For the LORD hath indig-
nation against all the nations, and fury against all their
host: he hath [1] utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered
3 them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out,
and the stink of their carcases shall come up, and the
4 mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the

[1] Heb. *devoted.*

xxxv. 5) of Edom to Judah no doubt dated from the subjugation of the former country by David (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14), so passionate a longing for vengeance as we find here is only intelligible after the crowning exhibition of Edomitish hostility in the day of Jerusalem's calamity (cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 7; Ezek. xxv. 12, xxxv. 5, 10 ff.; Obad. 10—16). This conclusion is confirmed by obvious traces of familiarity with writings belonging to the end of the Exile if not later (ch. xiii., xiv., xl. ff., esp. lxiii. 1—6), and by the fact that the dispersion of the Jews is presupposed by ch. xxxv. A more exact determination of its date is impossible. The mutual antipathy of Judah and Edom continued unabated for centuries after the Exile, and was constantly inflamed by fresh encroachments on Judean territory on the part of the Edomites, who in this period were being dispossessed of their ancestral possessions by the growing power of the Nabateans. Some such incident may have been the occasion of the threat in Mal. i. 2–5 (c. 450 B.C.), and a succession of them would keep alive the embittered feeling which is unmistakably present in this prophecy.

1–4. The announcement of the world-judgement, introduced by a proclamation addressed to all nations. The peoples are invited to *come near*, as if for debate (ch. xli. 1, xlviii. 16, lvii. 3), but really to hear their doom. Cf. ch. i. 2; Deut. xxxii. 1; Mic. i. 2.

the fulness thereof]—the same word as in ch. vi. 3.

all things that come forth of it] The word is used (1) of vegetation, the produce of the earth, (2) of a man's issue: here, apparently, by a mixture of metaphors, of mankind as springing from the earth.

2. *For the LORD hath indignation...*] It is remarkable that no reason is assigned for Jehovah's anger.

he hath utterly destroyed them] Lit. **he hath made them a devoted thing**, —*hērem*, a technical word for that which is irrevocably devoted to the deity, usually implying utter destruction. Cf. ch. xi. 15.

3. Cf. Joel ii. 20; Am. iv. 10.

4. The representation seems somewhat confused. Bickell acutely observes that "the host of heaven" is probably a marginal gloss to "their host" later in the verse, and that the original subject of the first

host of heaven shall [1]be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading *leaf* from the fig tree. For my sword hath drunk its fill in 5
heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my [2]curse, to judgement. The sword of the 6
LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. And the wild-oxen shall 7
come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be drunken with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the LORD'S 8

[1] Or, *moulder away* [2] Heb. *devoting*, or, *ban.*

clause ("the hills") has been displaced by it. The first line then supplies the parallel to the last line of *v.* 3 :—

"And the mountains shall melt with their blood
(4.) And all [the hills] shall be dissolved."

and the heavens...as a scroll] Cf. ch. li. 6; Ps. cii. 26; Matt. xxiv. 29; Rev. vi. 13, 14.

5—8. The slaughter of the inhabitants of Edom.

5. *my sword* (see on ch. xxvii. 1) **is drunk**] i.e. not "with blood" (which suggests an idea foreign to this passage) but "with fury," in preparation for its work, which is on earth.

Edom] The A.V. uses the Greek form "Idumea" here and in *v.* 6, and in Ezek. xxxv. 15, xxxvi. 5, without any justification.

the people of my curse] The last word is strictly **ban** (*herem*, cf. *v.* 2): "the people on whom I have laid the ban."

6. *The sword of the LORD is filled*] Render: **A sword hath Jehovah which is filled**, &c.

made fat with fatness] Or, "greased with fat" (different words in the original).

Bozrah (ch. lxiii. 1; Gen. xxxvi. 33; Am. i. 12; Jer. xlix. 13, 22) was a chief city of Edom, certainly not a place of that name in the Hauran; more probably *El-Buṣeira*, south of the Dead Sea; but Wetzstein identifies it with Petra.

7. *wild oxen...with them*] For the last two words read with Duhm **with fatlings** (עם מראים for עמם) to complete the parallelism with the next line. The Edomites are compared to sacrificial animals; cf. Zeph. i. 7; Jer. xlvi. 10, li. 40; Ezek. xxxix. 17 ff. (See also 2 Sam. i. 22.)

come down] sc. to the place of slaughter, Jer. xlviii. 15, &c.

8. Comp. ch. lxi. 2, lxiii. 4; Jer. l. 28, li. 6, 11.

vengeance, the year of recompence in the controversy of
9 Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch,
and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof
10 shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched
night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from
generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass
11 through it for ever and ever. But the pelican and the
porcupine shall possess it; and the [1]owl and the raven shall
dwell therein: and he shall stretch over it the line of con-
12 fusion, and the [2]plummet of emptiness. [3]They shall call
the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be
13 there; and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns

[1] Or, *bittern* [2] Heb. *stones.*
[3] Or, *As for her nobles, none shall be there to proclaim the kingdom*

the controversy of Zion] with Edom.

9—17. The fate of the land of Edom is next represented under two incompatible images,—first that of a perpetual conflagration (*vv.* 9, 10), and second that of a dreary solitude, peopled only by "doleful creatures" (*vv.* 11 ff.).

9, 10. The description is no doubt suggested by the volcanic phenomena which accompanied the destruction of the neighbouring cities of the Plain (Gen. xix.; Jer. xlix. 18). The division of clauses in the LXX. is preferable to that in the Hebrew Text. Render accordingly: ...**and its land shall become pitch, burning night and day; it shall not be quenched for ever: its smoke shall go up from generation to generation; it shall lie waste to all eternity, none passing through it** (so Cheyne). The last two clauses prepare for the transition to the other picture of ruin, which is elaborated in the verses that follow.

11. *the pelican and the porcupine*] Zeph. ii. 14. The former also in Lev. xi. 18; Ps. cii. 6; for the latter see on ch. xiv. 23.

the line of confusion, and the plummet of emptiness] See on ch. xxviii. 17. These implements of the builder were naturally employed where a partial destruction (of houses, &c.) was contemplated: but the image is also extended to the case of complete demolition; 2 Ki. xxi. 13; Lam. ii. 8. "Confusion" and "emptiness" stand for the words *tōhû* and *bohû*, used of the primeval chaos in Gen. i. 2 (cf. Jer. iv. 23).

12. *They shall call the nobles...there*] A very obscure sentence, probably through a defect in the text. The rendering of E.V. might be maintained if with Prof. Weir we suppose a transposition of words in the original; the inference being that the monarchy in Edom was elective (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 31 ff.). More likely, however, "her nobles" is the subject of a sentence the rest of which is now lost; and the following words are to be translated "and there is no kingdom there which they may proclaim."

shall come up in her palaces, nettles and thistles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of jackals, a court for ostriches. And the wild beasts of the desert 14
shall meet with the [1]wolves, and the [2]satyr shall cry to his fellow; yea, [3]the night-monster shall settle there, and shall find her a place of rest. There shall the arrowsnake make 15
her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: yea, there shall the kites be gathered, every one with her

[1] Heb. *howling creatures.* [2] Or, *he-goat* [3] Heb. *Lilith.*

13. The mention of nobles and princes naturally leads to the palaces and castles.

jackals...ostriches] See on ch. xiii. 21 f.

14. *wild beasts of the desert...wolves...satyr*] See again on ch. xiii. 21 f.

the night-monster] The Heb. is *Lîlîth*, a fem. formation from *lâyil* "night." Render with Cheyne: **the night-hag**. Lilith appears to be a creation of the Babylonian demonology. "This Lilith plays a great part in the Talmudic demonology; the cabalistic Rabbis forged a whole legend in which this spirit is said to have taken a feminine form to deceive Adam, and to have united herself to him." (Lenormant, *Chaldæan Magic*, Engl. Tr. p. 38.) She is mentioned in the Bible only here.

find her a place of rest] On the restlessness of evil spirits, cf. Matt. xii. 43, "walketh through dry places, seeking rest."

15. *the arrowsnake*] A small rapidly springing serpent, found in Arabia and Africa. The identification is based on a statement of Bochart that this snake was called by the Arabs *kippâzâh* (Heb. קִפּוֹז),—a word not given in the Arabic lexicons. Some adhere to the opinion that some kind of bird (A.V. "great owl") is denoted, because the only snakes that "hatch" are the pythons, which do not exist in these parts. But the writer's natural history might be at fault (see next note).

gather under her shadow] The expression is almost meaningless, when applied to a very small snake. Duhm, by a clever emendation, reads "shall lay and hatch and heap up her eggs" (*bêzêh* for *bîzillâh*).

16. The verse is remarkable in several respects. It seems to be a solemn assurance that the foregoing prediction shall be fulfilled literally and down to the smallest details; and must therefore be addressed to a future generation of readers. This implies a view of the scope and functions of prophecy, which is not that of the older prophets. Further, the expression "book of Jehovah" appears to point to the existence of a prophetic canon; and the opening exhortation presupposes a habit of searching for evidences of the fulfilment of prophecy. All these circumstances would indicate a late date for the composition of

16 mate. Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read:
no one of these shall be missing, none shall want her mate:
for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath
17 gathered them. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his
hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess
it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell
therein.

35 The wilderness and the [1]solitary place shall be glad;
and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the [2]rose.
2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy
and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it,
the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the
glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God.

[1] Or, *parched land* [2] Or, *autumn crocus* See Cant. ii. 1.

this oracle. Some commentators, however, have sought to evade this interpretation by amending the text with the help of the LXX.; reading: "According to their number Jehovah calls them, &c." But the received text excites no suspicion.

the book of the LORD] The immediate reference must be to the present prophecy, since there is no other which speaks of the desert creatures that are to possess the land of Edom. But the phrase is too pregnant to be used of a detached oracle; we must therefore conclude that it was destined to be incorporated in a collection of sacred writings.

my mouth...his spirit] The change of person is harsh. Read "the mouth of Jehovah" (LXX. has "Jehovah" alone).

17. The eternity of the judgement is again emphasised (*v.* 10).

Ch. xxxv. is full of reminiscences of earlier prophecies, chiefly from ch. xl. ff. Although there is no external mark of transition, there is no reason to doubt that it is the continuation of ch. xxxiv., and that the brilliant contrast is designed.

1, 2. Joy in the desert, now transformed into a fertile and luxuriant plain. Cf. ch. xli. 18 f.

1. *solitary place*] **parched land** (marg.).

the rose is probably the **autumn crocus** (marg.). Cant. ii. 1 shews that a meadow-flower of striking beauty is meant. Many commentators prefer the narcissus, a spring flower exceptionally plentiful in the plain of Sharon. (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, pp. 476 f.)

2. *the glory of Lebanon...Carmel and Sharon*] Cf. ch. xxxiii. 9, xxix. 17 (xxxii. 15).

they (lit. **these**) *shall see the glory of the* LORD] ch. xl. 5.

Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the [1]feeble 3
knees. Say to them that are of a [2]fearful heart, Be strong, 4
fear not: [3]behold, your God will come *with* vengeance,
with the recompence of God, he will come and save you.
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of 5
the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man 6
leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing:
for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in
the desert. And the [4]glowing sand shall become a pool, 7
and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation
of jackals, where they lay, shall be [5]grass with reeds and
rushes. And an high way shall be there, and a way, and it 8

[1] Or, *tottering* [2] Heb. *hasty.*
[3] Or, *behold, your God! vengeance will come, even the recompence of God*
[4] Or, *mirage* [5] Or, *a court for reeds* &c. See ch. xxxiv. 13.

3, 4. An exhortation to the despondent. For the figures of *v.* 3 see Job iv. 3, 4.

4. Cf. xl. 9, 10. *them that are of a fearful heart*] Lit. "the hasty of heart." The phrase occurs with a different sense in ch. xxxii. 4.

behold, your God...recompence] Better (as marg.): **behold, your God! vengeance cometh, the recompence of God; he himself,** &c.

5, 6a. The removal of bodily infirmities. How far the language is to be taken figuratively it may be difficult to say. Comp. ch. xxix. 18, xxxii. 3, 4.

6b. 7. The transformation of the desert. Cf. ch. xliii. 19, 20, xlviii. 21, xlix. 10.

7. *the glowing sand*] The Heb. word (*sharab*, only again in xlix. 10) is generally thought to be identical with *Serâb*, the Arabic name for the mirage (so marg.). Allusions to this remarkable optical phenomenon, by which even experienced travellers are often deceived, are, as might be expected, common in Arabic literature. Cf. *Koran* (*Sura* xxiv. 39):—

> "The works of the unbelievers are like the mirage in the desert;
> The thirsty takes it for water, till he comes up to it and finds that it is nothing."

(Quoted by Gesenius.) The idea in the text, therefore, would be that the illusion which mocks the thirsty caravan shall become a reality; water shall be as common in the desert as the mirage now is. The rendering "parched ground" (A.V.), however, corresponds with Jewish usage and the ancient versions; and the sense "mirage" is unsuitable in ch. xlix. 10.

in the habitation...rushes] A literal rendering of the Heb. would

shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; [1]but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men,
9 yea fools, shall not err *therein*. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon, they shall not
10 be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there*: and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

[1] Or, *for he shall be with them &c.* Or, *and he shall walk in the way for them, and fools &c.*

be: "in the habitation of jackals, its lair, a court (the word rendered 'habitation' in E.V. of ch. xxxiv. 13) for reeds and rushes." This yields no sense. The text appears to have suffered extensive mutilation.

8—10. The highway in the desert. The image is founded on ch. xl. 3, xliii. 19, xlix. 11 (xi. 16).

8. The words *and a way* are superfluous, and may have originated through dittography. LXX. reads "a pure highway."

but it shall be for those] Better (with an emendation of the text): **but it shall be for his people.** It is probable also that the next words should be joined to this clause,—"it shall be for His people when it walks in the way," i.e. goes on pilgrimage. The verse as a whole suggests that the way is for the permanent use of pilgrims (cf. ch. xix. 23), not for the temporary purpose of the Return from Babylon (as in ch. xliii. 19, &c.). Another proposed rendering is "and He Himself (Jehovah) walks in the way for them" (cf. ch. lii. 12). But this is less natural.

fools shall not err therein] If this clause be (as suggested) independent of the preceding, the meaning is that fools shall not be there at all. The Heb. word for "fool" (*'ĕvîl*) connotes moral perversity, not merely the simplicity of inexperience (Job v. 3; Prov. i. 7).

9. *the redeemed*] cf. ch. li. 10, lxii. 12, lxiii. 4.

10. The verse is found verbatim in ch. li. 11. Cf. also li. 3, lxi. 7.

everlasting joy shall be upon their heads] See ch. lxi. 3—"a garland for ashes."

CHAPTERS XXXVI.—XXXIX.

These chapters form the conclusion of the first part of the book of Isaiah. They contain narratives of three important historical events, each of which illustrates the commanding influence exercised by the prophet in the reign of Hezekiah. These are:—(1) the unsuccessful efforts of Sennacherib to obtain possession of Jerusalem by threats and blandishments (ch. xxxvi., xxxvii.); (2) Hezekiah's sickness and recovery

(ch. xxxviii.); and (3) the embassy of Merodach-baladan to Hezekiah (ch. xxxix.). At a time when the books of Scripture circulated separately it was important that readers of the book of Isaiah should have before them all the information about the career of the great prophet that could be collected from authentic sources; and there is no reasonable doubt that these chapters are an excerpt from the canonical books of Kings (2 Kings xviii. 13—xx. 19). The view of Vitringa and others (based on 2 Chr. xxvi. 22, xxxii. 32) that Isaiah himself is the author, and that the passage was transferred from his pages to those of the historian, is not borne out by a comparison of the two texts. The narrative before us reveals its secondary character by a tendency towards abridgement and simplification; and in other respects shews "manifest traces of having passed through the hands of the compiler of Kings" (Driver, *Introd.*, 8th ed., p. 227). That the editor of the books of Kings drew in his turn upon an older document is certain; but there is no great reason to suppose that the Isaianic editor used this work as an independent authority. The decision will turn mainly on whether the opening verse (xxxvi. 1 = 2 Ki. xviii. 13) belonged originally to the prophetic document, or to another source incorporated in the narrative of Kings.

The important differences between the two parallel texts are: (*a*) the omission in Isaiah of the account of Hezekiah's submission (2 Ki. xviii. 14—16); and (*b*) the addition of Hezekiah's Psalm of Thanksgiving on his recovery (ch. xxxviii. 9—20). The omission (*a*) can be explained by the author's desire to pass over an incident which was not of immediate interest for the biography of Isaiah. (*b*) The Song of Hezekiah must have been added from a separate source.

Ch. XXXVI., XXXVII. Hezekiah, encouraged by Isaiah, resists Sennacherib's summons to surrender.

We have here to all appearance the record of two successive attempts of the Assyrian king to extort the surrender of Jerusalem; in the first instance by a display of armed force (xxxvi. 1—xxxvii. 8), and then by a threatening letter to Hezekiah (xxxvii. 9—38). There is an obvious improbability in the view thus presented of Sennacherib's conduct. The advance of Tirhakah (xxxvii. 9) would no doubt render the possession of Jerusalem more than ever indispensable to his safety, and a second summons to Hezekiah after the first had failed might in these circumstances be intelligible. But it is not easy to suppose that he could have expected Hezekiah, with Ethiopian succour at hand, and after having defied a detachment of the Assyrian army, to yield to a mere letter, and one that simply repeats the former arguments with no additional inducement to surrender. There is besides a close parallelism between the two incidents which strongly suggests that the chapters contain two versions of the same occurrence instead of a single narrative of two successive events. On this view, which commends itself to the majority of scholars, and which we unhesitatingly adopt, the

first narrative (A) consists of xxxvi. 1—xxxvii. 9*a*, 37, 38; and the second (B) of xxxvii. 9*b*—36.

The narratives differ chiefly in the following respects. (1) In (A) the demand for surrender is backed by military force; in (B) it is simply conveyed by messengers in the form of a letter. (2) In (A) Hezekiah, on receipt of the summons, sends a deputation to Isaiah; in (B) he betakes himself with the letter to the Temple. (3) In (A) Isaiah waits to be consulted; whereas in (B) his interposition is spontaneous. (4) The answers put into Isaiah's mouth are different. (5) In (A) the relief of Jerusalem is attributed to a "rumour," in (B) to a miraculous destruction of the Assyrian host.

It is only in the last two points that the divergence is of material importance. In regard to (4) it must be remarked in the first place that several utterances of Isaiah's during these anxious days might have been preserved, and been incorporated in different documents. Further, it will be seen from the notes that of the three parts into which Isaiah's message falls in (B) only *vv.* 33—35 originally belonged to that narrative. When we compare this with *vv.* 6, 7 in (A), we find no such difference as would indicate either a modified situation, or legendary invention in one case or the other. In both the point of the prediction is simply the "turning back" of the Assyrian when the prize seemed within his grasp; and an announcement couched in such sober terms is little likely to have been invented by a later writer, least of all by a writer who had in view the dramatic fulfilment recorded in *v.* 36. The two poetic passages in (B), *vv.* 22—29 and 30—32, appear to be insertions in that document. The former is an elaboration of the theme of *vv.* 6, 7 or 33—35 (see *v.* 29), composed not by Isaiah himself but probably (since *v.* 25 presupposes the Assyrian conquest of Egypt in 670; and the language has affinities with II Isaiah) by a younger disciple. The latter (30—32) is almost certainly an authentic oracle of Isaiah, although its preservation in this connexion is accidental. As regards (5) the cause of Sennacherib's retreat—we cannot do better than illustrate the discrepancy of the two narratives by a striking historical parallel quoted by H. Schmidt. In the Prusso-Austrian war of 1866, it is well known that Bismarck's chief motive for concluding peace without occupying Vienna was his fear lest Napoleon should intervene on the side of Austria. But it appears that before he could urge this course on the king he learned from some officers that cholera had broken out in their regiments; and he was influenced by both considerations when he advised his master to bring the war to an immediate close. Similarly, the final collapse of Sennacherib's expedition may have been due both to the rumour of Tirhakah's advance and to an outbreak of pestilence in his camp; and neither tradition is discredited by its divergence from the other.

On the relation of the incidents here recorded to other events of the campaign we must refer to the Introduction, pp. xx ff.

Some writers have espoused the theory of Winckler, that the narrative (B) does not refer to the campaign of 701 at all, but to a later

Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king 36
Hezekiah, that [1]Sennacherib king of Assyria came up
against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. And 2

[1] Heb. *Sanherib.*

expedition of Sennacherib which is supposed to have taken place between 690 and 681. But this second Assyrian invasion of Palestine is purely conjectural, the cuneiform evidence being of the slightest (see Introd., p. xlvi), and Winckler's arguments against assigning the incident to 701 can all be satisfactorily met. His chief points are: (1) The discrepancy as to the reason for Sennacherib's retreat. This objection has already been dealt with; and the answer holds good against the particular theory held by Winckler, who (transferring *v.* 9*a* from (A) to (B)) thinks that the "rumour" of *v.* 7 refers not to Tirhakah but to a revolt in Babylon which engaged Sennacherib's attention in the following year. (2) The narrative (B) gives the impression that the death of Sennacherib took place shortly after his return to Nineveh, whereas it did not occur till 681. This difficulty of course vanishes if *vv.* 37 f. belong to (A) (Winckler assigns them to (B)); but in any case the foreshortening of time is what might be expected in a narrative written at some considerable distance after the events. (3) Tirhakah did not become "king of Egypt" until 691. On this point see on xxxvii. 9 below.

1. (=2 Ki. xviii. 13.) *in the fourteenth year*] The year of Sennacherib's expedition was beyond question 701 B.C. If this was really the fourteenth year of Hezekiah his accession must have taken place in 715. On the objections to this date, see Chronological Note, pp. lxxxi f. Assuming that the arguments there given are valid, the error in this verse might be accounted for in either of two ways. (1) It has been suggested that ch. xxxviii. f. stood originally before ch. xxxvi. f., and that in the process of transposition the precise specification of time, which really belonged to ch. xxxviii., was retained as the introduction to the whole group of narratives. The 14th year of Hezekiah would thus be the true date, not of Sennacherib's invasion, but of Hezekiah's sickness and the embassy of Merodach-baladan. (2) A second supposition is that the date was inserted here by an editor, who arrived at it by a calculation based on ch. xxxviii. 5. Deducting the 15 years' lease of life assured to Hezekiah by the prophet from the 29 years of his reign, he rightly concluded that his sickness must have occurred in the 14th year of his reign, and supposing further that all these events were nearly contemporaneous, he substituted this exact date for some vaguer statement which he may have found in his original. A third hypothesis, —that the date is correct, but that the name Sennacherib has been wrongly written for Sargon,—falls to the ground with the whole theory of an invasion of Judah by the latter monarch.

all the fenced cities of Judah] Sennacherib himself boasts that he captured forty-six of them in this campaign.

the king of Assyria sent [1]Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jeru-
salem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood
by the conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the
3 fuller's field. Then came forth unto him Eliakim the son
of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the
4 [2]scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the [3]recorder. And
Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus
saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence
5 is this wherein thou trustest? I say, *thy* counsel and strength
for the war are but vain words: now on whom dost thou
6 trust, that thou hast rebelled against me? Behold, thou

[1] The title of an Assyrian officer.
[2] Or, *secretary* [3] Or, *chronicler*

2. *Rabshakeh* is not a proper name, but an official designation, like the Tartan (see ch. xx. 1) and the Rab-saris (chief-eunuch) who are mentioned along with him in 2 Ki. xviii. 17. The Assyrian word is *Rab-saḳ*, said to mean "chief of the officers" (Delitzsch), or "chief cup-bearer" (Zimmern).

from Lachish] The most important Judean fortress in the Shephelah, commanding the road from Egypt. Recent excavations by Mr Flinders Petrie have identified its site with Tell-el-Hesy, a few miles distant from the modern Umm Lakis. Its siege by Sennacherib on this occasion is depicted on a bas-relief, now in the British Museum: see Introd. p. xx.

the conduit of the upper pool...] See on ch. vii. 3.

3. The words "and they called for the king" in 2 Ki. xviii. 18 are omitted at the beginning. *Eliakim...which was over the household*] See ch. xxii. 15, 20. It will be seen that Eliakim here occupies the office formerly held by Shebna, although the latter still appears in a subordinate capacity as *scribe* or rather **secretary** (marg.).

the recorder] Lit. **the remembrancer**. See 1 Ki. iv. 1 ff.

4—10. The speech of the Rabshakeh, dealing with the two motives which might be supposed to have induced Hezekiah to rebel: (1) his reliance on the help of Egypt (*vv.* 6, 9), and (2) his religious confidence in Jehovah (*vv.* 7, 10); and pointing out the futility of resistance. The speech appears to be given in two recensions; *vv.* 5*b*—7 being a (later) duplicate of *vv.* 8—10 (so Schmidt).

5. *I say...vain words*] Rather (as Cheyne and others) **Thinkest thou that a mere word of the lips is counsel and strength for war?** "You cannot think so," reasons the Rabshakeh, "you must have some ground of confidence; what is it?" The allusion is perhaps to the empty promises of Egypt. The text must be corrected in accordance with that of 2 Kings xviii. 20 ("thou sayest [thinkest]" for "I say [think]").

trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust on him. But if thou say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: 7 is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? Now therefore, I pray 8 thee, [1]give pledges to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. How then canst thou turn 9 away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? And am I now come up without the LORD 10 against this land to destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it. Then said Eliakim and 11

[1] Or, *make a wager with*

6. *the staff* (i.e. **support**) *of this bruised reed*] For the idea, cf. ch. xxx. 1—5; for the figure, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.

7. Not only is Hezekiah destitute of earthly help, but he has forfeited the protection of his own deity, by what from the heathen point of view seemed an act of sacrilege, the abolition of the local sanctuaries (see 2 Ki. xviii. 4). The argument, if really used by the Rabshakeh, would shew how closely the Assyrians watched the internal affairs of the smaller states. The speech, however, is a free composition of the late editor, and only proves that in his view the reformation of the cultus (see 2 Ki. xviii. 4) took place before 701.

8. *give pledges to*] Better (as marg.): **make a wager with**. The taunt must have been peculiarly galling to the war-party in Judah, who were painfully conscious of their weakness in cavalry; ch. xxx. 16, xxxi. 1, 3, and *v.* 9 of this chapter.

9. Hezekiah's power is not equal to that of the lowest official in the Assyrian Empire; yet he dares to defy the great king! The word rendered *captain*, meaning the "governor" of a province, is here grammatically harsh, and is probably to be deleted.

10. That the Assyrian should represent himself as commissioned by Jehovah to avenge the desecration of His sanctuaries is not by any means incredible. A precisely similar sentiment is put into the mouth of Cyrus in his account of the conquest of Babylon. It expresses no serious religious conviction (see *v.* 20); and the resemblance to Isaiah's teaching (ch. x. 5 ff.) is either accidental, or is due to a Jewish colouring unconsciously imparted to the narrative by the writer.

For *this land*, in the first half of the verse, we read in 2 Ki. xviii. 25 "this place," i.e. Jerusalem.

Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the [1]Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of
12 the people that are on the wall. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he* not *sent me* to the men that sit upon the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their
13 own water with you? Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye
14 the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall
15 not be able to deliver you: neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of
16 Assyria. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, [2]Make your peace with me, and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his

[1] Heb. *Aramean.* [2] Heb. *Make with me a blessing.*

11, 12. The Judean ministers, fearing the effect of these threats on the people, implore the Rabshakeh to speak to them in Aramaic; but the astute diplomatist immediately perceives his advantage, and sets himself to stir up disaffection amongst the populace.

11. *the Syrian* (or **Aramean**, marg.) *language*] was the medium of international communication in Western Asia, more especially of commerce. Assyrian on the other hand was a barbarous tongue to the Hebrews (ch. xxviii. 11, xxxiii. 19).

the Jews' language] Hebrew is so called only in one other (post-Exilic) passage, Neh. xiii. 24.

12. *to eat...*] Note the contrast in *v.* 16. The clause, therefore, expresses not the desire or purpose of the king of Assyria, but the effect of continuing to sit on the wall in pursuance of Hezekiah's insane policy.

13—20. The Rabshakeh's appeal to the people.

13. *the great king*] It is to be observed that the speaker consistently withholds the title of king from Hezekiah.

14. *to deliver you*] Add, from 2 Ki. xviii. 29, **out of his** (or better, **my**) **hand.**

15. *The LORD will surely deliver us*] Cf. ch. xxxvii. 35.

16. *Make your peace with me*] Lit. "Make to me a blessing" (see marg.). The expression does not occur elsewhere, and its exact sense is doubtful. Probably "make peaceful submission to me."

come out to me] The ordinary phrase for the surrender of a city

fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern:
until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, 17
a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.
Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will 18
deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered
his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where 19
are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of
Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my
hand? Who are they among all the gods of these countries, 20
that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the
LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? But they 21
held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the
king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. Then 22
came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the house-
hold, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph
the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told
him the words of Rabshakeh.

And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that 37

(1 Sam. xi. 3; Jer. xxi. 9, &c.). *and eat*] **that ye may eat.** If they will but yield now, they may at once resume the cultivation of their fields and orchards.

17. But only for a time! The Rabshakeh does not conceal from them that their ultimate fate will be deportation; although he tries to present it in an attractive light. The parallel verse in 2 Kings (xviii. 32) contains these additional words "a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying," &c.,—overlapping *v.* 18.

18—20. The long record of Assyrian conquest shews the folly of Hezekiah's trust in divine power. Cf. ch. x. 9—11.

18. *persuade*] Rather, **beguile.**

19. On *Hamath and Arpad*, see ch. x. 9. *Sepharvaim* has usually been identified with Sippar to the north of Babylon. Since, however, it is always mentioned along with Hamath and Arpad, it is more probable that a city in northern Syria is meant. Some consider it to be the same as Sibraim (=*Shabarain*, destroyed by Shalmaneser V in 727) in Ezek. xlvii. 16 (between Damascus and Hamath). 2 Ki. xviii. 34 (M.T. but not LXX.) adds *Hena and Ivvah* as in ch. xxxvii. 13.

and have they delivered] Others translate "how much less have they (the gods of Samaria) delivered." The Hebrew is peculiar. It seems necessary to restore a clause preserved in LXX. (Luc.) of 2 Ki. xviii. 34, and read: "Where are the gods of the land of Samaria? Have they delivered, &c."

xxxvii. **1—4.** Hezekiah, thrown back at last on the policy of faith

he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth,
2 and went into the house of the LORD. And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto
3 Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely: for the children are come
4 to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, [1]whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer

[1] Or, *wherewith the king of Assyria...hath sent him*

consistently advocated by Isaiah, sends an influential deputation to the prophet, entreating him to intercede for the nation in this extremity. (Cf. 2 Ki. xxii. 12—14; Jer. xxxvii. 3.) The king's message could not fail to be interpreted as a public confession of the failure of the policy which had landed him in such a desperate situation.

1. *went into the house of the LORD*] See *vv.* 14, 15. Cf. 1 Ki. viii. 33, 34.

2. The embassy consists of the two chief ministers, and the "elders of the priests." The appearance of Shebna on such an errand was a striking evidence of the completeness of Isaiah's moral victory (ch. xxii. 15 ff.).

3. *a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely*] Rather, **of distress and chastisement and rejection.** The word for "contumely" (Neh. ix. 18, 26 [pl. R.V. "provocations"]; Ezek. xxxv. 12 [R.V. "blasphemies"]) is differently pointed from that here used, which occurs only here and in the parallel 2 Ki. xix. 3. The sense "rejection" suits the context better; the king speaks of the "distress" as a divine dispensation.

the children are come to the birth...] Obviously a proverbial expression for a crisis which becomes dangerous through lack of strength to meet it (cf. ch. lxvi. 9; Hos. xiii. 13).

4. *It may be*] **Peradventure.** The one hope is that Jehovah will take notice of the dishonour done to His name by the threats and blasphemies of the Assyrian king. *the LORD thy God*] See ch. vii. 13. The prophet stands nearer to God than other men. Jehovah is a *living God*, as opposed to the dead idols to whose level the boast of the Assyrian had degraded Him. (Cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 36.)

wherefore lift up...] The efficacy of intercessory prayer is taught and assumed throughout the Old Testament: see Gen. xviii. 23 ff.: Ex. xxxii 31 ff.; 1 Sam. xii. 19; Am. vii. 2, 5; Jer. xiv. 11, xv. 1, &c.

for the remnant that is left. So the servants of king 5
Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, 6
Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be
not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith
the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.
Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear a 7
rumour, and shall return unto his own land; and I will
cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria 8
warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was de-
parted from Lachish. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah 9
king of Ethiopia, He is come out to fight against thee.
And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah,

the remnant that is left] i.e. what is left of the population of Judah. Cf. *vv.* 31, 32. The word is not that used elsewhere by Isaiah himself, nor is the idea the same as his.

5. The verse is really subordinate to *v.* 6, —"And when the servants ...came...Isaiah said," &c.

6, 7. Isaiah's answer far exceeds the king's request. He does not need now to pray, for he is already in possession of the divine message for this crisis.

6. *the servants*] Lit. "the youths." Cf. 1 Kings xx. 14.

7. *I will put a spirit in him*] i.e. a spirit of craven fear, depriving him of his natural courage and resourcefulness. How the spirit will work is stated in what follows: a mere rumour will drive him back to his own land, there to meet his death (cf. 2 Ki. vii. 6). There is no allusion in this oracle to the disastrous blow recorded in *v.* 36. The "rumour" is no doubt that of the approach of Tirhakah (*v.* 9), although in reality Sennacherib's retreat seems to have been mainly caused by the report of troubles in Babylon.

8. *Libnah*] another of the "fenced cities" of Judah (Josh. x. 29). Its situation is not known.

9. *Tirhakah* (named only here in the O.T.) did not actually become *king of Ethiopia* till about 688 B.C. (Breasted). He was however the chief minister, and the leading force in Ethiopian politics, during the two preceding reigns of Shabaka and Shabataka; and it is a very harmless and natural anachronism to designate him here by his later title.

The first narrative is interrupted here, to be resumed without a break at *v.* 37.

9 b—36. The Second Narrative.

9 b. Lit. "And he heard and sent, &c.": in 2 Ki. xix. 9, "And he again sent, &c." These are two attempts, by means of editorial insertions, to make the second narrative the continuation of the first.

10 saying, Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah,
saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive
thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of
11 the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the
kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by [1]destroying
12 them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods
of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have
destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children
13 of Eden which were in Telassar? Where is the king of
Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of
14 Sepharvaim, of Hena, and [2]Ivvah? And Hezekiah received
the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it:
and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and

[1] Heb. *devoting them.* [2] In 2 Kings xvii. 24, *Avva.*

The original introduction to the second narrative has of course been suppressed.

10—13. Sennacherib's letter to Hezekiah. It is in substance a repetition of the chief argument of the Rabshakeh, with the unimportant modification that Hezekiah is here regarded as deceived by his God, while the Rabshakeh chose to represent him as a deceiver of his people.

11. *by destroying them utterly*] Lit. **putting them to the ban**, see on ch. xxxiv. 2.

12. *my fathers* here means "my predecessors"; for the dynasty to which Sennacherib belonged had been founded by his father Sargon. The place-names in this verse are all found on the Assyrian monuments. (See Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, on 2 Ki. xix. 12.) *Gozan* (Assyr. *Guzana*) is one of the places to which the Northern Israelites were exiled (2 Ki. xvii. 6, xviii. 11); it lay on the river Chaboras, a northern affluent of the Euphrates. *Haran* is the well-known commercial emporium of northern Mesopotamia, on another tributary (the Belikh) west of the Chaboras. *Rezeph* (Assyr. *Raṣappa*) is about 20 miles south of the Euphrates on the route from Haran to Palmyra. *Telassar* is in Assyrian *Til-Assuri* ("Hill of Asshur"), a name likely to be of frequent occurrence. The place here can hardly be the Babylonian Til-Assuri mentioned in the monuments; it may rather have been one of the cities of *Eden*, i.e. the small kingdom called *Bit-Adini* on the Upper Euphrates.

13. *Hamath...Arpad...Sepharvaim*] See ch. xxxvi. 19. *Hena and Ivvah* are not known, but must be sought in Syria. The latter is probably the same as *Ava* or *Avva* (2 Ki. xvii. 24).

14—20. Hezekiah's prayer in the Temple. Cheyne refers to a striking parallel in the Egyptian version of Sennacherib's overthrow. "On this the monarch (Sethos), greatly distressed, entered into the inner

spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed unto 15
the LORD, saying, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, that 16
[1]sittest upon the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou
alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made
heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; 17
open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words
of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living
God. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid 18
waste all the countries, and their land, and have cast their 19
gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of
men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed

[1] Or, *dwellest between*

sanctuary, and before the image of the god (Ptah) bewailed the fate which impended over him. As he wept he fell asleep, and dreamed that the god came and stood by his side, bidding him be of good cheer, and go boldly forth to meet the Arabian (Assyrian) host, which would do him no hurt, as he himself would send those who should help him" (Herod. II. 141, Rawlinson).

14. *spread it* (the letter) *before the LORD*] that Jehovah might take notice of the arrogance displayed by it. The act is symbolic. Similarly the Jews at the beginning of the Maccabee insurrection spread out in prayer a copy of the Law, defaced with idolatrous pictures, as a witness to the outrages perpetrated against their religion (1 Macc. iii. 48).

16. The prayer opens with a solemn invocation of Jehovah, first as God of Israel, and second as the only true God and Creator of all things.

that sittest (or, **art enthroned**) *upon the cherubim*] Cf. 1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2; Ps. lxxx. 1. The Cherubim may have been originally symbolic representations of the storm-cloud (see Ps. xviii. 10) and hence bearers of the Divine Presence (Ezek. i.); but the reference here is undoubtedly to the two figures over the ark in the Temple.

thou art the God...alone] **thou art (He that is) God alone.** The sole divinity of Jehovah is here presented as a theological consequence of the doctrine of creation, a fundamental idea in the teaching of ch. xl. ff. Although the doctrine of creation was held in Israel from the earliest times, it seems to have been by slow degrees that its full religious significance was apprehended.

17. *to reproach* **a** *living God*] as in *v.* 4.

18. *have laid waste*] This verb is never used of nations, except in ch. lx. 12. It differs by a single letter from "laid under the ban" in *v.* 11, and ought to be altered accordingly.

all the countries (lit. **lands**), *and their land*] Read as in 2 Ki. xix. 17. **the nations and their lands** (see A.V.).

19. *the work of men's hands*] Cf. ch. ii. 20, xvii. 8, xxxi. 7.

wood and stone] Deut. iv. 28, xxviii. 36, 64, xxix. 17; Ez. xx. 32.

20 them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his
hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that
thou art the LORD, even thou only.
21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying,
Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Whereas thou
22 hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, this
is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him:
The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed
thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her

20. Therefore let Jehovah shew, in this crisis of religion, that He alone possesses true Godhead.

that thou art the LORD, even thou only] Lit. "that thou art Jehovah alone," cf. Deut. vi. 4. But the easier, and perhaps the original, reading is given by 2 Kings "that thou Jehovah art God alone" (see *v.* 16).

21—35. The answer to the prayer comes in the form of a message from Isaiah. The message as here given really consists of two distinct oracles: (1) a poem, on the pride and the approaching humiliation of Sennacherib (*vv.* 22 *b*—29); to which is appended a short passage in a different rhythm addressed to Hezekiah (*vv.* 30—32); (2) a definite prediction, in a less elevated style, of the deliverance of Jerusalem (*vv.* 33—35). The lyrical passage (*vv.* 22 *b*—32) appears to have been inserted in the narrative from some independent source. The recitation of a somewhat elaborate poem is hardly a natural form for a prophetic communication to take at so critical a juncture. A terse and pregnant oracle, such as we have in *vv.* 33—35, suits the situation better, and since these verses contain a complete and direct answer to the prayer of Hezekiah, we need not hesitate to regard them as the actual message of the prophet on this occasion. A slight indication of the original connexion of the narrative may possibly be found in the "therefore" of *v.* 33, referring back to the "whereas" of *v.* 21.

21. The construction of the verse is entirely altered in 2 Ki. xix. 20 by the introduction of the words "I have heard." It then reads "That which thou hast prayed...I have heard." But the addition is unnecessary: and the text in Isaiah is to be preferred.

22—29. The poem on Sennacherib is in substance a Taunt-song, but in form an elegy, written in the measure characteristic of the *qînāh*. The first two lines (*v.* 22) read:

She mócks thee, she púts thee to scórn—the vírgin of Zíon;
Behínd thee sháking her héad—Jerúsalem's daúghter.

The prophet anticipates the ignominious retreat of the Assyrian king ("behind thee"), leaving Jerusalem still a "virgin" fortress. To "shake the head" is in the O.T. a gesture of contempt (Ps. xxii. 7; Jer. xviii. 16; Lam. ii. 15, &c.).

head [1]at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? 23
and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up
thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel.
By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast 24
said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to
the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of
Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and
the choice [2]fir trees thereof: and I will enter into his
farthest height, the forest of his fruitful field. I have 25
digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I
dry up all the rivers of [3]Egypt. Hast thou not heard how 26

[1] Heb. *after.* [2] Or, *cypress*
[3] Or, *defence* Heb. *Mazor.* See ch. xix. 6.

23. "What sort of being is He whom thou hast defied?" The first three sentences are rhetorical questions, to which the last is the answer: **against the Holy One of Israel.** To "lift up the voice" means here to speak proudly, not as often to cry aloud (e.g. ch. xiii. 2).

24, 25. The king of Assyria is represented as boasting of the ease with which he triumphs over all natural obstacles in the pursuance of his plans; such language is blasphemy against Jehovah, the Lord of Nature. The tenses in the speech may all be made perfects by a change of vowels, or they may all be rendered by presents; the king's meaning being simply that he constantly performs such impossibilities as these. The Assyrian parallels cited by Cheyne are very striking (see his *Commentary*, p. 219 and the references there).

24. For *servants* 2 Kings has "messengers," as in *vv.* 9, 14.

am I come up] Better, **I go up.** The "I" is emphatic. To have penetrated "trackless paths and difficult mountains on wheels of iron and bronze" is a favourite boast of Assyrian monarchs.

innermost parts] **recesses.**

his farthest height] or (changing the text in accordance with 2 Ki. xix. 23) **its last retreat** (lit. "lodging-place").

the forest of his fruitful field] (see ch. x. 18, xxix. 17, xxxii. 15 f.) perhaps the cedar groves on the highest ridges.

25. *I have digged...water*] **I** (again emphatic) **dig and drink foreign waters.** The word "foreign" is to be supplied from 2 Ki. xix. 24.

all the rivers (lit. "Nile-streams") *of Egypt*] See on ch. xix. 6. This would be an extravagant hyperbole on the lips of Sennacherib: no Assyrian army had ever yet set foot in Egypt, and Sennacherib was not destined to see that dream fulfilled.

26, 27 In all his successes the Assyrian has been but the unconscious instrument of Jehovah's eternal purpose. Cf. ch. x. 5—15.

26. The verse reads, with a slight change of pointing: **Hast thou**

I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times?
now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to
27 lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their
inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and
confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as
the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as
28 [1]a field *of corn* before it be grown up. But I know
thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in,
29 and thy raging against me. Because of thy raging against
me, and for that [2]thine arrogancy is come up into mine

[1] In 2 Kings xix. 26, *corn blasted.* [2] Or, *thy careless ease*

not heard from afar? I have done it: From the days of old have I formed it: now I bring it to pass. And so hast thou been (able) to lay waste in ruined heaps defenced cities. Cf. ch. xxii. 11, xliv. 7, xlvi. 11.

27. *Therefore their inhabitants...confounded*] Better, **And their inhabitants (being) of small power** (lit. "short of hand") **were terrified and ashamed.**

grass on the housetops] See Ps. cxxix. 6—8.

a field...grown up] The Heb. text "a cornfield before it is in stalk" gives no sense. The A.V. adopts the reading of 2 Ki. xix. 26, "a blasting (שדפה [ἁπ. λεγ.] for שדמה) before it is in stalk." But neither rendering accounts for the words "before it is in stalk" (לפני קמה). In all probability they are, as Wellhausen has suggested, a corruption of לְפָנַי קָמְךָ as the opening words of the next verse. But *v.* 27 cannot well end either with "cornfield" or "blasting"; and various attempts have been made to restore a suitable ending. We may read either (with Kittel) "a cornfield before the east wind" (לפני קדים), or (with Meinhold) "blasted before the east wind" (שָׁדֵף מלפני ק׳).

28, 29. All the acts of the Assyrian are under the strict surveillance of Jehovah, who will shew His power over him by dragging him back, like a wild beast, to his place. If the emendation of Wellhausen (see on *v.* 27) be accepted, *vv.* 28, 29*a* read: **Before me is thy rising up and thy sitting down** (cf. Ps. cxxxix. 2), **and thy going out and thy coming in; and thy raging against me and thy tumult, has come to my ears.** The words omitted ("I know" in *v.* 28, and "Because of thy raging against me" in 29*a*) are probably insertions consequential on the disturbance of the text at the beginning.

29. *arrogancy*] Strictly (as marg.) **careless ease**; but this is probably a corruption of the word for "tumult" (A.V.). Read with Budde שַׁאֲנַנְךָ for שַׁאֲנָנְךָ.

ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. And this shall be the sign unto 30 thee: ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. And [1]the remnant that is escaped of 31

[1] Heb. *the escaped of the house of Judah that remain.*

And I will *put my hook in thy nose*] Cf. Ezek. xix. 4, xxix. 4, xxxviii. 4.

turn thee back...] See *vv.* 7 and 34.

30—32. A sign is given to Hezekiah of the fulfilment of the promise. The verses are not necessarily nor even naturally the continuation of the preceding poem; as an independent utterance they produce a strong impression of originality. Beyond the brief period of hardship which must follow the invasion, the prophet looks forward to the advent of a new age in which all his hopes for the future of Israel shall be realised.

30. The "sign" of this verse is of the same nature as that of Ex. iii. 12 (see on ch. vii. 14). It consists of a series of events, in themselves natural, which will attest the fact that all the circumstances of the deliverance had been foreordained by Jehovah, and foretold by His prophet.

that which groweth of itself] Heb. *sapîah*, the scanty crop produced by the shaken grains of the last harvest (Lev. xxv. 5, 11).

that which springeth of the same] *shâhîṣ* or in 2 Kings *sâhîsh*, a word which does not occur elsewhere. It is explained to mean "that which springs from the roots" of the corn. The import of the sign is that for two harvests the regular operations of agriculture will be suspended. It is uncertain how long a period of Assyrian occupation is thus contemplated. The year runs from October to October; and *this year* must apparently mean the year in which the crops were destroyed by the invader. We may suppose that the prophecy was spoken in the beginning of the year, i.e. in the autumn of 701, before the usual season of ploughing. The question then arises, How long would the Assyrians require to remain in the land in order to destroy the prospects of another harvest? Wetzstein states that at the present day, unless the ground has been several times broken up in the previous summer the seed will be lost in the ground. Hence the Assyrian occupation in the autumn of 701 would interfere with the necessary preparations for a crop in the following year, the year of the *shâhîṣ*. But even this limited period cannot be reconciled with the actual result as recorded in *v.* 36. Probably therefore the sign does not fix the term of the Assyrian occupation, but refers to wider effects of the invasion, the depopulation of the country, the destruction of homesteads, &c., which rendered an immediate resumption of agricultural activity impossible.

the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and
32 bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth
a remnant, and out of mount Zion they that shall escape:
33 the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this. Therefore
thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He
shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there,
neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast a mount
34 against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he
return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith the LORD.
35 For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake,
and for my servant David's sake.
36 And the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the
camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five
thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold,

31. Comp. ch. xxvii. 6.

32. *the zeal of the* LORD*...this*] As in ch. ix. 7.

33—35. An assurance that Jehovah will protect Jerusalem, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer.

33. *Therefore* probably attaches itself to "whereas" in *v.* 21 (see the note on that verse).

34. Cf. *vv.* 7 and 29.

35. *I will defend this city*] Cf. ch. xxxi. 5, where the same verb is used.

for my servant David's sake] An expression of frequent occurrence in the books of Kings. See 1 Ki. xi. 13, 34, xv. 4; 2 Ki. viii. 19.

36. The miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's host. It is certainly remarkable that none of Isaiah's prophecies delivered at the time predict this disaster, the clearest anticipation of it being in ch. xvii. 12—14, an oracle delivered some time before. At the same time some such occurrence is needed to account for Sennacherib's precipitate retreat before Tirhakah. A confirmation of the main fact is perhaps to be found in the Egyptian legend, according to which Sennacherib was advancing against Egypt, when in a single night his army was rendered helpless by a plague of field-mice which gnawed the bows of the soldiers and the thongs of their shields (Herodotus, II. 141). Since the mouse appears to have been a symbol of pestilence (1 Sam. vi. 4) we may infer that the basis of truth in the legend was a deadly epidemic in the Assyrian camp; and this is the form of calamity which is naturally suggested by the terms of the biblical narrative. The scene of the disaster is not indicated in the O.T. record. The silence of Sennacherib about his misfortune is quite intelligible.

the angel of the LORD] is associated with the plague in 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16.

they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria 37
departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.
And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of 38
Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons
smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land
of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And 38

37, 38. The flight of Sennacherib, and his death at Nineveh: the original continuation of *v. 9a*, and conclusion of the first narrative.

37. *departed...went...returned ..dwelt*] The accumulation of verbs may be due to the fusion of the two narratives at this point. The first will probably have read: "So S. struck his camp and returned to Nineveh"; the other that he "went and dwelt at N."

38. The official account of Sennacherib's death as given in the Babylonian Chronicle (col. iii. 34–38) is as follows: "On 20 Tebet Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was killed by his son in a revolt. [23] years reigned Sennacherib in Assyria. From 20 Tebet to 2 Adar the revolt was maintained in Assyria. On 18 Sivan Esar-haddon, his son, ascended the throne in Assyria." (Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, II. pp. 281 ff.) The event took place in 681, twenty years after Sennacherib's disappearance from Palestine. During these years he claims to have conducted five successful campaigns; but he never found another opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Palestine, and the very fact that he lived so long may have been forgotten in Judah before this history was written.

Nisroch his god] No Assyrian deity of this name has as yet been found on the monuments. The text is not beyond challenge.

Adrammelech and Sharezer] Both Assyrian names. The former is named as the parricide by profane historians (although not in the inscriptions); the latter only here. The motive for the crime is explained by the statement of Polyhistor, that Sennacherib had placed Esar-haddon on the throne of Babylon during his own lifetime, an act which would naturally excite the jealousy of his other sons (Budge, *History of Esar-haddon*, p. 2).

Ararat is the Hebrew equivalent of the Assyr. *Urartu*, Armenia.

Esar-haddon reigned from 681—668.

Ch. XXXVIII. Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery.

1. *In those days*] The incident must have preceded by some months the embassy of Merodach-baladan, the probable date of which will be considered in the introduction to ch. xxxix. The order of the chapters cannot be chronological, and the vague expression "in those days" need not perhaps mean more than "in the time of Hezekiah." If, as Delitzsch and others have supposed, ch. xxxviii. f. stood before xxxvi. f. in the original document, the note of time would naturally refer to some other events in Isaiah's biography which had been previously narrated.

Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said
unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order;
2 for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his
face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, and said,
3 Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have
walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and
have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah
4 wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah,
5 saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the
God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have
seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen
6 years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand

Set thine house in order] Lit. "Give commandment concerning thy house," the last duty of a dying man (2 Sam. xvii. 23). An example of what is meant may be found in David's elaborate death-bed charge to Solomon (1 Ki. ii. 1—9).

2. *turned his face to the wall*] (cf. 1 Ki. xxi. 4) an instinctive expression of the feeling that he was alone with God in this bitter moment.

3. *with a perfect heart*] Lit. "with a whole heart," one absolutely devoted to Jehovah. Both this phrase and the following *that which is good in thy sight* are characteristic of the compiler of Kings; cf. 1 Ki. viii. 61, xi. 4, 38, xv. 3, 14, &c. The motive of this prayer is clearly expressed in the Song of Thanksgiving which follows (see *vv.* 11, 18, 19).

4. In 2 Ki. xx. 4 we read that "afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court (R.V.)," this message came to him. So quickly was the king's prayer answered. A somewhat similar instance of the revocation of one prophetic communication by another is that of Nathan in the matter of the building of the Temple (2 Sam. vii. 3, 4 ff.).

5. The verse is greatly abbreviated from 2 Ki. xx. 5. After *Hezekiah* the words "the prince of my people" are omitted; and also the sentence "I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord," which follows the word *behold*. It cannot be doubted that the historical book here preserves the original text.

the God of David thy father] for whose sake this special mercy is vouchsafed to the king (cf. ch. xxxvii. 35; 2 Ki. xx. 6).

fifteen years] agreeing with 2 Ki. xviii. 2 and 13 (=Isa. xxxvi. 1). See the notes on xxxvi. 1 and on ch. xxxix., and the Chronological Note, p. lxxxii. Since the king began to reign in his twenty-fifth year, it is after all not a long life that is here promised to him. His reign was to be doubled.

6. This is the only verse which would lead us to suppose that the events synchronised with Sennacherib's invasion; but its genuineness is more than doubtful. An unqualified assurance of deliverance is hardly

of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. And 7
this shall be the sign unto thee from the LORD, that the
LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken: behold, I 8
will cause the shadow on the steps, which is gone down on
the [1]dial of Ahaz [2]with the sun, to return backward ten
steps. So the sun returned ten steps [3]on the dial whereon
it was gone down.

[1] Heb. *steps.* [2] Or, *by* [3] Or, *by which steps it &c.*

consistent with the prophet's attitude to the king's policy at the time supposed. Hezekiah was deeply committed to projects of rebellion in the first years of Sennacherib's reign, and a political message from Isaiah in those circumstances could hardly fail to be accompanied by a warning against the tendency which prevailed at the court. Since the verse breaks the connexion between *vv.* 5 and 7, and since the latter part is a reproduction (in 2 Kings an exact reproduction) of ch. xxxvii. 35, there are good grounds for supposing that it has been inserted by the compiler of the books of Kings. The insertion is an additional proof that originally ch. xxxviii. f. stood before xxxvi. f., otherwise the deliverance of Jerusalem could not be referred to as a *future* event.

7, 8. After *v.* 6, 2 Kings describes the prophet's prescription for the malady (see on *v.* 21). The account of the sign also is given in a much fuller form there. It was granted at the express request of the king (see *v.* 22), who had not his father's fear of "tempting the Lord" (ch. vii. 12). Allowed to choose between a "going forward" and a "going backward" of the shadow, he decided for the latter as not so "light" a thing (i.e. less conceivable); when, at Isaiah's intercession, the desired thing happened.

8. *with the sun*] It is necessary to strike out the preposition "with" (as in the LXX.). The whole verse then reads literally: **Behold, I will turn the shadow of the steps which the sun has gone down on the steps of Ahaz backward ten steps; and the sun turned back ten steps on the steps which it had gone down.** We must suppose that the "steps," whatever they were, could be seen from the sick-chamber of Hezekiah, to whose mind the sign had an obvious symbolical significance. The retreating shadow, miraculously lengthening the day, was a pledge of the postponement of that "night in which no man can work" which had almost overtaken him. What kind of apparatus is denoted by the "steps of Ahaz" we have no means of determining. It is not clear, indeed, that a regularly constructed sun-dial of any kind is meant: a shadow falling on some flight of steps in the palace-court, and affording a rough and ready measure of time, would sufficiently explain the terms used.

9—20. Hezekiah's thanksgiving for his recovery. This psalm, which is not given in the parallel narrative in 2 Kings, must have been inserted here from an independent source. An external mark of the insertion is

The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.

10 I said, In the [1] noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of [2] the grave:
I am deprived of the residue of my years.

[1] Or, *tranquillity* [2] Heb. *Sheol.*

found in the displacement of *vv.* 21, 22 from their proper context. The superscription (*v.* 9) resembles the preface to Hab. iii., and the titles to several of the Psalms; and was no doubt found in the document from which the poem was transcribed. The song, therefore, was in all probability traditionally ascribed to Hezekiah, but whether this judgement rests on historical authority, or merely on its inherent suitability to his circumstances, it is impossible to say. The linguistic evidence points to a late date. The poem, like many of the Psalms, is a record of individual experience, but adapted for use in the Temple worship (*v.* 20). The experience is that of a man who has been brought face to face with death, who has prayed for life, and has been "heard in that he feared"; but with the reticence which characterises the Psalmists all details of merely personal interest are suppressed with a view to the liturgical use of the poem.

The psalm may be divided into two parts (both indicated in the superscription, *v.* 9):—

i. *vv.* 10—14. A description of the writer's anguish and despair in the near prospect of death.

ii. *vv.* 15—20. His joy and gratitude when assured of his recovery.

9. *The writing of Hezekiah*] According to some commentators we should read "A Michtam of Hezekiah" (changing a letter in the Heb.). The word *Michtam* occurs in the titles of Pss. xvi., lvi.—lx.; but is of uncertain derivation and meaning.

10. *In the noontide of my days*] lit. "in the stillness of my days." The phrase has been variously interpreted; but the best sense is that given by the R.V., whether the noon be conceived as the time of rest, or (as in an Arabic idiom) the time when the sun seems to stand still in the heavens. Hezekiah was at the time in his thirty-ninth year. (Cf. "in the midst of my days," Ps. cii. 24.)

the gates of the grave (lit. **of Sheol**)] Cf. Job xxxviii. 17; Ps. ix. 13, cvii. 18. In the "Descent of Ishtar," the Babylonian Hades is represented with seven concentric walls, each with a gate.

I am deprived (lit. "punished") *of the residue of my years*] The verb for "be punished" does not elsewhere bear the sense of "be mulcted" as it must do in this translation. Duhm, with a different division of the verse, renders as follows:—

"I said, In the noontide of my days I must depart;
I am consigned (cf. Jer. xxxvii. 21) to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years."

I said, I shall not see [1]the LORD, *even* [1]the LORD in the 11
land of the living:
I shall behold man no more [2]with the inhabitants of the
world.
Mine [3]age is removed, and is carried away from me as a 12
shepherd's tent:
I have rolled up like a weaver my life; he will cut me off
from the [4]loom:
From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.
[5]I quieted *myself* until morning; as a lion, so he breaketh 13
all my bones:
From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

[1] Heb. *Jah.* [2] Or, when I am *among them that have ceased to be*
[3] Or, *habitation* [4] Heb. *thrum.*
[5] Or, *I thought until morning, As a lion, so will he break &c.*

11. Death is the end of all communion both with God and men. To *see the LORD* is to enjoy the sense of His presence in the appointed acts of worship (see on ch. i. 12). The thought that Sheol afforded no such opportunities of converse with the living God was that which made death a terror to O.T. believers (cf. *v.* 18; Ps. lxxxviii. 5, &c.).

the LORD, even *the LORD*] Heb. יה יהוה; but this is certainly a mistake for יהוה, which is read by some MSS.

the inhabitants of the world] The received text has "the inhabitants of cessation" (*ḥedel*), i.e. "of the place where life ceases," an expression for the underworld (see marg.). The reading *ḥeled* ("the world") is found in some Heb. MSS.; and is rightly preferred by E.V.

12. Figures setting forth the utter frustration of his hope of life. The first is that of a nomad's tent, easily pitched and soon removed.

Mine age is removed] Render: **My habitation** (see marg.) **is plucked up.** The sense "habitation" is Aramaic and Arabic, and does not occur again in the Bible (but see on ch. liii. 8). Elsewhere the word means "generation," in the sense of "contemporaries," which is obviously unsuitable here. For *is carried away* read **is covered.** Then follow two figures from weaving.

I have rolled up] as the weaver does the finished web. *from the* **thrum** (marg.)] the threads by which the web is attached to the loom.

from day even to night] i.e. apparently "both day and night" (cf. Job vii. 4).

make an end of me] Or perhaps **deliver me up** (to my torments).

13. *I quieted* myself *until morning*] It is better to amend the text slightly and read **I cried** (שִׁוַּעְתִּי) **until morning.**

so he breaketh all my bones] the crushing effect of pain. Cf. Lam. iii. 4.

14 Like a swallow *or* a crane, so did I chatter:
I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail *with looking* upward;
O LORD, I am oppressed, be thou my surety.
15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it:
I shall go [1]softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.
16 O Lord, by these things men live,
And wholly therein is the life of my spirit:
[2]Wherefore recover thou me, and make me to live.

[1] Or, *as in solemn procession* See Ps. xlii. 4.
[2] Or, *So wilt thou recover me*

14. *Like a swallow* or *a crane*] Both words occur again only in Jer. viii. 7. The want of a copula in Heb., and the unsuitability of the verb "chirp" (E.V. "chatter") to the note of the crane suggests that the latter may have been imported into the text from the passage in Jeremiah.

I did mourn as a dove] Cf. ch. lix. 11; Ezek. vii. 16; Nah. ii. 7.

with looking *upward*] lit. **toward the height**, where Jehovah dwells.

be thou my surety] (Job xvii. 3). The image is that of a debtor who is being committed to prison.

15, 16. Two extremely difficult verses. As commonly explained, *v.* 15 introduces the second half of the song with an exclamation of amazement at the wonderful deliverance experienced. Literally it reads:

"What shall I say? And He said to me—and *He* (emphatic) did it;
I shall walk with leisurely pace all my years—because of the bitterness of my soul."

The words *he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it* would refer to the promise of recovery through the prophet, and the fulfilment of it. This whole conception of the verse is vigorously criticised by Duhm, who renders thus:—

"What shall I speak and say to Him—since *He* has done it?
I toss to and fro all my sleeping time—because of the bitterness of my soul."

The Heb. word rendered *go softly* ("toss to and fro") is found again only in Ps. xlii. 4, where it means "to walk in festal procession." Duhm in this passage is disposed to connect it with a noun found in Job vii. 4 ("tossings to and fro").

16. The thought expressed by E.V. is somewhat as follows: "By such divine words and deeds (*v.* 15) men are preserved in life; and by such things my spirit is revived." No one will say that this is either

Behold, *it was* for *my* peace *that* I had great bitterness: 17
But [1]thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the
pit of [2]corruption;
For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.
For [3]the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate 18
thee:
They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy
truth.
The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do 19
this day:
The father to the children shall make known thy truth.
The LORD is *ready* to save me: 20

[1] Heb. *thou hast loved my soul from the pit.* [2] Or, *nothingness*
[3] Heb. *Sheol.*

good Hebrew or a natural sense: and the text is almost certainly corrupt. The verb "live" closely resembles an Aramaic verb (*ḥiwwāh* occurring several times in the O.T.) meaning "to declare"; and this was evidently read by LXX.: *περὶ αὐτῆς γὰρ ἀνηγγέλη σοι.* Starting with this, Duhm now (ed. 3) makes the verse read:

"Lord, on account of this doth my heart wait on Thee,
Quicken my spirit, let me recover, and revive me."

His emendations however are somewhat sweeping.

17. *Behold...bitterness*] (lit. "it was bitter to me, bitter"), i.e. the bitterness of affliction was mercifully overruled so as to yield "peaceable fruit" through his recovery (cf. Heb. xii. 11). The clause is wanting in the LXX.

but thou hast in love...pit] Lit. (according to the Hebrew text) "and thou hast loved my soul out of the pit..."—a pregnant construction of perhaps unexampled boldness. The true reading is **thou hast kept back my soul**, &c. (*ḥasakta* for *ḥashakta*).

For *pit of corruption* render **pit of annihilation**.

cast...behind thy back] An image for utter forgetfulness: 1 Ki. xiv. 9; Neh. ix. 26; Ps. l. 17. The Psalmist recognises in his deliverance the pledge that his sins are forgiven and forgotten.

18, 19. The deepest motive for the saint's gratitude is that only on earth can he know the joys of fellowship with God.

18. With the thought of this verse comp. Ps. vi. 5, xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 10—12, cxv. 17.

the grave] **Sheol** (marg.).

19. *the father...truth*] Cf. Ps. xxii. 30, xlviii. 13, 14, lxxi. 18, lxxviii. 3, 4.

20. Perhaps a liturgical appendix, adapting the psalm for congregational use. Hence the transition from 1st pers. sing. to 1st pers. plu.

Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments
All the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

21 Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.
22 Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

we will sing...instruments] Rather, **we will play with string music** ("we" including the Levites or the congregation). The word for "string music" is *Nĕgînôth*, which occurs frequently in the headings of the Psalms. Here and in Hab. iii. 9 it has the suffix of 1st pers. sing. ("my"), which it is very difficult to explain.

21, 22. Cf. 2 Ki. xx. 7, 8, where the verses stand in their natural connexion. They are obviously out of their true places here. The pluperfects in the English translation are ungrammatical (Driver, *Tenses*, pp. 84 ff.); we must render **And Isaiah said...And Hezekiah said.**

21. *lay it for a plaister*] Lit. **rub it.** Many commentators suppose that the malady from which Hezekiah suffered was the plague; and Gesenius explains that the appearance of the "boil" would be a hopeful, though not a certain, symptom of recovery. He adds that the application of figs is resorted to by modern Arabian and Turkish physicians in cases of pestilence. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* XIX. 34) speaks of them as useful "ad aperienda ulcera."

CH. XXXIX. THE EMBASSY OF MERODACH-BALADAN.

Merodach-baladan (in Babylonian *Marduk-abal-iddin*) was king of Babylon for twelve years (721 –709) in the reign of Sargon, and again for six (or nine) months (*circa* 705) in the reign of Sennacherib. He was originally the Chaldean ruler of Bit-Yakin, a small state in southern Babylonia; and his long and finally unsuccessful struggle for the throne of Babylon is interesting as foreshadowing the future ascendancy of the Chaldeans in the dynasty of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. That he was able so long to hold his own against a powerful monarch like Sargon was largely due to his practice of forming alliances with the enemies or disaffected subjects of the Assyrian Empire, a policy of which this chapter furnishes an illustration. Since his final overthrow by Sennacherib took place before the latter's invasion of Palestine, it is quite certain that ch. xxxix. (and consequently xxxviii.) is to be dated before ch. xxxvi. f. There is, however, a difference of opinion as to whether this embassy belongs to the earlier and longer period of his reign or to the brief interval of power at the beginning of Sennacherib's reign. The vague date "in those days" at the beginning of ch. xxxviii. seems of course to favour the latter view. On the other hand it might be urged that a short and precarious reign of nine months would hardly

39 At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king
of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he
2 heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. And
Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of
his [1]precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices,

[1] Or, *spicery*

afford opportunity for negotiations with distant enemies or disaffected provinces of the Assyrian Empire. Apart, therefore, from the intricate chronological problem involved (on which see again pp. lxxx ff.), internal probability is decidedly in favour of the earlier period. This was the period preceding Sargon's chastisement of Philistia (see on ch. xx.), when, as he himself informs us, Judah along with the neighbouring states, while "bringing presents to Asshur my lord" was "speaking treason." That Judah was spared on this occasion must have been due to a timely submission on the part of Hezekiah. And indeed the narrative before us produces the impression that while the king was greatly flattered by the attention shewn to him, he yet did not commit himself to a formal treaty, but left himself free to be guided by the development of events. It follows of course from this view that the events of ch. xxxviii. f. have no connexion with those of ch. xxxvi. f. and that the chronological order has been reversed.

1. *Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan*] The form "Berodach" in 2 Ki. xx. 12 is incorrect. The name Baladan, unless it be an artificial formation of the Hebrew writer, can have nothing to do with the second constituent of Merodach baladan (*abal-iddin*).

letters] **a letter**, as ch. xxxvii. 14. LXX. adds καὶ πρέσβεις, i.e. "ambassadors," whose presence is assumed in the next verse. Duhm and others read "eunuchs" (סָרִיסִים) on account of the peculiar prediction of *v.* 7.

for he heard] 2 Ki. xx. 12 **had heard**, correctly. The text here reads strictly "and he heard."

had been sick, and was recovered] (2 Ki. xx. 12 omits the recovery). As early as the time of the El-Amarna letters we find the custom of sending presents to a brother monarch who had been sick an established part of court etiquette. But the motive here specified was merely a pretext to veil the real political object of the mission. This appears clearly enough in what follows. According to 2 Chron. xxxii. 31 the embassy was prompted by scientific curiosity with regard to the miracle of the sun-dial.

2. *And Hezekiah was glad of them*] Not only was his vanity flattered, but the arrival of the envoys fell in with political projects to which he was even then too ready to lend his ear. The reading is decidedly preferable to the flat and meaningless "heard of them" in 2 Ki. xx. 13 (not LXX.).

the house of his precious things] (Heb. בֵּית נְכֹתֹה) R.V. marg. has "house of his spicery," identifying the word with one found in Gen.

and the precious oil, and all the house of his [1]armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed
3 them not. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.
4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not
5 shewed them. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word

[1] Or, *jewels*

xxxvii. 25, xliii. 11. But this rendering has only an apparent justification in the "spices" mentioned below. The right meaning is given by the Targ. and Peshito: **treasure-house.** According to the younger Delitzsch it is the Assyrian *bit nakanti*. It is obvious that Hezekiah's treasury was still full, which could not have been the case after the ruinous fine exacted by Sennacherib (2 Ki. xviii. 14—16).

the spices, and the precious oil] **the spices and the fine oil.** (Cf. 2 Chron. xxxii. 27.) These natural products of the land were probably stored for commerce and are mentioned as a source of wealth.

the house of his armour] better: **his armoury.** It is probably the same as the "house of the forest (of Lebanon)" in ch. xxii. 8.

3. The prophet's appearance on the scene shews that he suspected the king of coquetting with a foreign alliance, although it is remarkable that on neither side is there any explicit allusion to the political aspect of the affair. Perhaps the first evasive answer of Hezekiah betrays a consciousness of wrong-doing.

from a far country] He answers that part of the question which involved least embarrassment. It is hardly likely that he means to hint that an alliance with so distant a country was out of the question; more probably he will excuse himself on the ground of hospitality to strangers who had come so far. It is noticeable that he does not mention the ostensible motive of the embassy.

5. *Hear the word of the LORD*] Isaiah's tone is threatening, because he sees in this thing a sin against Jehovah. It was not necessary to specify wherein the offence consisted; king and prophet understood each other perfectly. The reception of an embassy from the sworn enemy of the king of Assyria was in itself an act of rebellion likely to precipitate a conflict which Isaiah strove to avert; and the childish vanity displayed by Hezekiah, his pride in earthly resources, and his readiness to enter into friendly relations with the powers of this world, were tendencies against which Isaiah's ministry had been a continuous protest. All these tendencies sprang from a single root, the lack of tha

of the LORD of hosts. Behold, the days come, that all that is 6
in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up
in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing
shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall 7
issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take
away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of

absolute faith in Jehovah as the all-sufficient guide and protector of the nation which was the fundamental article of Isaiah's political programme.

6, 7. This is the only occasion on which a prophecy of the Babylonian Exile appears to be attributed to Isaiah. It would not be easy to reconcile such a prediction with the particular circumstances in which it is reported to have been uttered. The announcement naturally left on Hezekiah's mind the impression that his own days would be spent in peace (but see on *v.* 8), whereas in reality the most critical juncture of his reign still lay before him; and it is hardly credible that Isaiah should have disclosed to him the remote fate of his descendants, without warning him of the more immediate and personal consequences of his folly. This difficulty would be removed if we could hold that the prophecy was uttered *after* the deliverance from Sennacherib; but we have seen that this supposition is inadmissible on historical grounds. A more serious consideration is that Isaiah's Messianic ideal leaves no room for a transference of the world-power from Assyria to Babylon, or the substitution of the latter for the former as the instrument of Israel's chastisement. He uniformly regards the intervention of Jehovah in the Assyrian crisis as the supreme moment of human history and the turning point in the destinies of the kingdom of God, to be succeeded immediately by the glories of the Messianic age. The prediction, moreover, is without a parallel in the prophetic literature of Isaiah's age (in Mic. iv. 10 the clause "and thou shalt go to Babylon" is inconsistent with the context, and in all probability a gloss). On the other hand, it is right to notice that a prophecy which was never fulfilled is not likely to have been composed after the event. It may be possible to defend its authenticity by detaching it from any reference to the Babylonian Exile, and holding that by the "king of Babylon" Isaiah does not mean a ruler of the world-empire which *succeeded* the Assyrian, but the reigning king of Assyria, who as matter of fact made it a point at this time to be crowned as king of Babylon. Babylon seems to have been regarded as the spiritual metropolis (like Rome in the Middle Ages) even under the Assyrian empire; and Isaiah's thoughts might be directed to it rather than Nineveh, by the omen which he is interpreting, viz. that the overtures were made from Babylon. Comp. Manasseh's imprisonment *in Babylon*, by an *Assyrian* monarch, Assburbanipal (2 Chr. xxxiii. 11).

7. The words *which thou shalt beget* seem, according to usage, to imply that the calamity would fall on Hezekiah's own children.

8 Babylon. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

8. *Good is the word of the* LORD] An expression of pious resignation, including repentance; cf. 1 Sam. iii. 18.

there shall be peace and ***truth*** (or **faithfulness**) *in my days*] In the Old Testament the postponement of a calamity is always regarded as a mitigation of its severity; see 1 Ki. xxi. 28 f.; 2 Ki. xxii. 18 ff. But the sentence was probably added by a late scribe, who thought that this took place after the failure of Sennacherib's expedition. It is wanting in the LXX. of 2 Ki. xx. 19, and even in the Hebrew its form is somewhat different.

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